

THE WISDOM OF NOT KNOWING: THE ROLE OF HUMILITY IN LUTHER'S
EARLY THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Matthew Aaron Stark

Submitted to the Faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department History,
Indiana University

May 2015

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Master's Thesis Committee

Eric L. Saak, PhD., Chair

Daniella J. Kostroun, PhD.

Thomas J. Davis, PhD.

PREFACE

The idea for a thesis on Martin Luther's teachings on certainty, particularly in the realm of salvation, originates in my own personal struggles with achieving *Heilsgewissheit*, or assurance of salvation. Time and again, I shared my struggles with various professors, pastors, and theologically astute laymen and more times than not, they would refer me to the writings of Martin Luther. Indeed, Martin Luther was known for his inner turmoil, or *Anfechtung*, particularly in regards to being certain of one's acceptance by God. After years of reading the periphery of Luther's teachings on certainty, I decided to dive in with a study of certainty in Luther's lectures on one of his favorite books of the Bible, Paul's epistle to the Romans.

After thoroughly reading Luther's lectures on Romans I was somewhat taken aback at the appearance of Luther's denial of the existence of certain knowledge of one's imputed justification. Luther used phrases such as "hidden unbelief" and "dangerous presumptions of certainty" to describe people who claim to know with certainty that they are justified by God and their works are acceptable to him. However, at the suggestion of my graduate advisor, Dr. Eric Saak, I reviewed Luther's comments on certain knowledge in the context of Luther's interpretation of the overall theme of Romans. When I began to view Luther's view of certainty not in isolation but in the context of the theme of humility, his comments on certain knowledge of salvation took a different form than what appeared at first glance. The following pages contain the results and conclusions of Luther's view of certainty when taken in context with his focus on humility in his Lectures on Romans.

Many thanks are due to Drs. Thomas Davis and Daniella Kostroun who have taken time out of their busy schedules to serve on my thesis committee and render valuable insights to the present work. I would especially like to thank Dr. Eric Saak for serving as my thesis advisor and head of my graduate committee. His patience, critiques, and advice have proven invaluable through this journey. I would also like to thank Drs. Chris Bounds, Dave Smith, and Mark Smith for their ceaseless prayers, support, and encouragement through the twists and turns of this thesis process. Finally, and most of all, I would like to thank my wife Sheri. Without her encouragement, faith, patience, and love, the following work would have proven impossible.

-“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us”-Hebrews 12:1

CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Word Analysis of <i>Humilitas</i> in Luther's Lectures on Romans	9
Chapter 3: Martin Luther's Main Themes of Humility in Romans	45
Chapter 4: Relationship between <i>Humilitas</i> and <i>Cognitio Incerta</i> in Romans	60
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	72
Bibliography	75
Curriculum Vitae	

ABBREVIATIONS

- LW* *Luther's Works*, ed. J. Pelikan and H. Lehman (St. Louis, 1957-)
- OESA* *Ordo Eremitarum sancti Augustini* (Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine)
- WA* *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar, 1883-)

Chapter 1

Introduction

“What else does Scripture teach if not humility?”¹ Martin Luther asked this question near the beginning of his Lectures on Romans in the year 1515 as a professor of Theology at the University of Wittenberg. As this question indicates, humility was a consistent theme that Luther found in Scripture, particularly throughout the fifteen chapters of Paul’s epistle to the Romans. However, as the present work will demonstrate, humility was more than one topic among many that Luther discussed in his Lectures on Romans. Rather, Luther linked humility to a number of theological topics in Romans. One such topic is that of certitude, what Bengt Hägglund identified as “The heart of Martin Luther’s theology.”²

Though Luther scholars fiercely debate particular points of Luther’s theology and when exactly Luther became ‘evangelical,’ there is general agreement that one of the core desires Martin Luther attempted to satisfy in his life was the search for certainty, particularly in regards to justification. Indeed, Luther himself, in 1525, bewailed, “For what is more miserable than uncertainty?”³ Thus, the question to be explored is what is the relationship between humility and certainty in Luther’s Lectures on Romans?

However, the scholarly treatments of Luther’s early theology of humility and, subsequently, its relationship to certainty, have often been treated under the context of the search for when Luther became “evangelical.” Ernst Bizer in his 1958 book, *Fides ex Auditu*, concluded that all of Luther’s theological material up to his Lectures on Hebrews

¹ “Quid enim aliud tota Scriptura docet quam humilitatem?” WA 56.199, 30.

² Bengt Hägglund, “Heilsgewissheit,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopadie* 14 (1985): 760.

³ “Quid enim incertitudine miserius?” See *De servo arbitrio*. WA 18. 604, 33.

(1517-1518)⁴ was in his “pre-reformer” phase and, furthermore, concluded that Luther’s pre-reformer theology can be summarized as “humility.”⁵ Several scholars have subsequently categorized Luther’s view of certainty in his Lectures on Romans from this “pre-reformer” lense. Bizer saw a tension between Luther’s early theology of humility (up to 1517) and what Bizer saw as the core of Luther’s mature theology (beginning in the winter of 1517): belief in the provisions and promises of Christ, which was also where Luther’s doctrine of certainty appeared.⁶

Additionally, Bizer described the humility that Luther taught in Romans as one that seemed to be at tension with the *Heilsgewissheit* (assurance of salvation) that Luther “demanded” at the same time.⁷ However, Bizer asserted that Luther’s view of humility in Romans actually taught a type of security of salvation through works rather than what was taught in Luther’s later career.⁸ Thus, the seeming contradiction in Luther’s view of humility and certainty was a characteristic of Luther’s “pre-reformer” career. This idea of a fracture or “tension” in Luther’s early thought has been shared by other scholars who have set up Luther’s understanding of humility before his “breakthrough” in opposition to his eventual “reformer” doctrine of certainty.

Martin Brecht, in the first of his three-volume biography of Luther, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation*, also characterized Luther’s first lectures (Psalms and

⁴ Ernst Bizer, *Fides ex Auditu: Eine Untersuchung über die Entdeckung der Gerechtigkeit Gottes durch Martin Luther* (Neukirchen am Niederrhein: Neukirchener Verlag, 1958), 75.

⁵ Bizer, *Fides ex Auditu*, 20-21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

Romans) as “a theology of humility.”⁹ Brecht identified the main theme of Luther’s Lectures on Psalms and Romans as people coming to the realization of their true condition before God and putting their trust solely in God’s forgiving grace. Luther’s early theology emphasized that “All of Scripture teaches humility, a humility which consists precisely in recognizing sin.”¹⁰

Thus, according to Brecht, humility was not simply one of the topics mentioned in Luther’s early lectures, it was the core concern that revealed the heart of Scripture. The theme of humility gave Luther’s early theology, particularly in Romans, an aura of a “gloomy and serious piety.”¹¹

Martin Brecht also emphasized that, in the overall question as to whether Luther was a reformer in Romans, “he (Luther) was and yet he was not.”¹² For Brecht, Luther showed signs of his mature theology in Romans through Luther’s refusal of people’s role in their salvation and emphasis on faith but had not yet fully developed the certainty and sense of freedom that he would teach in a few years. Brecht associated Luther’s theology of humility in Romans as opposing the certitude that would characterize Luther’s later theology.

Bernhard Lohse also followed in Bizer’s steps of setting up a dialectic between Luther’s “pre-reformer” doctrine of humility on Psalms and Romans and his doctrine of justification *extra nos* and eventual certitude of salvation in *Martin Luther’s Theology: Its*

⁹ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 128.

¹⁰ Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 132-133.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹² *Ibid.*, 128.

Historical and Systematic Development. Agreeing with Bizer regarding Luther's Lectures on Psalms, Lohse characterized faith and humility as broadly synonymous with each other. Faith meant people acknowledging their sinfulness before God and their inability to help themselves through their own power.¹³

In Luther's subsequent lectures on Romans, Lohse asserted that "Luther gave clear evidence of progress beyond the first Psalms lecture."¹⁴ Lohse saw this "progress" as particularly evidenced by Luther's use of the terms *extra nos* and *simul iustus et peccator* (one is a righteous and a sinner at the same time).¹⁵ Although disagreeing with Brecht regarding the importance of humility in Luther's Lectures on Romans, Lohse did agree that certain examples of Luther's idea of humility, such as Luther's metaphor of the sick person and the doctor, which represented the sinner being healed throughout his life,¹⁶ contradicted Luther's "Reformation sharpening" and therefore "genuine assurance of salvation is not yet to be found in the Romans lecture."¹⁷ Thus, for Lohse, although no overall "*humilitas* theology" existed in Romans, Luther's comments made under the context of humility demonstrated a partial lack of "reformation sharpening" which Lohse characterized as certainty of salvation.¹⁸

Heiko Oberman addressed Bizer's theses from *Fides ex Auditu* in his essay "Wir sein pettler. Hoc est verum. Bund und Gnade in der Theologie des Mittelalters und der

¹³ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 60.

¹⁴ Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 70.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 69, 74-77.

¹⁶ This I will argue in Chapter 3 is an example of Luther's continued theme of humility in Romans.

¹⁷ Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 77.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

Reformation,” found in *Die Reformation: Von Wittenberg nach Genf*.¹⁹ Oberman, although acknowledging the medieval roots of Luther’s early theology of humility, nonetheless also distinguished it from his predecessors.²⁰ Among other differences, Oberman pointed out that in Luther’s view of humility in his first Lectures on Psalms and Romans, rather than the humility of the “cloaca” being something to be overcome, it is actually where people are blessed and God does his work.²¹ Additionally, Oberman emphasized that Luther’s theology of humility, especially in Romans, must be viewed from the context of his teaching of “double sin,” and *extra nos*.²²

Oberman also stressed that in Luther’s early Lectures on the Psalms and Romans, humility was more than a virtue but rather the beginning of people’s spiritual journey, where they appear in front of God empty handed. Although Oberman agreed with Bizer and Lohse in that humility was often synonymous with faith in Luther’s early lectures,²³ Oberman concluded that Bizer’s “pre-reformer” view of humility in Luther’s early writings was actually that which he retained up to his last written words, “We are beggars, this is true.”²⁴

Thus, Oberman did not see two different types of humility before and after his reformation “discovery” but rather his reformation “turn” rested on his discovery of the humility evident in his earliest lectures from 1513-1516, well before Bizer’s dating of

¹⁹ Heiko A. Oberman, “Wir sein pettler. Hoc est verum. Bund und Gnade in der Theologie des Mittelalters und der Reformation,” in *Die Reformation: Von Wittenberg nach Genf* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986), 91-92.

²⁰ Oberman, “Wir sein pettler,” 100-101.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

Luther's discovery.²⁵ Therefore, although Oberman rejected placing Luther's theology of humility in Romans in his "pre-reformer" career, he (Oberman), nonetheless, discussed it under the context of what he saw as evidence of evangelical theology in Luther's works as early as 1513, when Luther presented his first Lectures on the Psalms.²⁶

One of the more recent works to discuss Luther's early theology of humility was Berndt Hamm in *The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation*.²⁷ Like Oberman, one of Hamm's intentions was to view Luther's early theology of humility from the medieval tradition and was critical of viewing Luther's early theology from the vantage point of his proposed "evangelical turn" in 1517/1518.²⁸ However, rather than focusing on humility, Hamm discussed it under the larger topic of Luther's developing doctrine of faith. For Luther, humility worked together with faith in that humility brings people to be "unsure of themselves," yet personal assurance of salvation is provided through faith.²⁹ Hamm described this dichotomy as "the fractured nature of his (Luther's) understanding of faith's assurance of salvation" which has led several scholars, including Lohse, to deny a certainty of salvation in Luther's Lectures on Romans.³⁰

Hamm also agreed with Oberman in that Luther demonstrated signs of his "reformation" theology of faith (with humility as a component) in his first Lectures on

²⁵ Oberman, "Wor sein pettler," 101.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

²⁷ Berndt Hamm, *The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation*, trans. Martin J. Lohrmann (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014).

²⁸ Hamm, *The Early Luther*, 60, 80-81.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 77, n.47.

the Psalms.³¹ However, Hamm went beyond Oberman's theses in that he drew the conclusion that Luther's doctrine of faith and humility in his early lectures did not preclude a certainty of salvation.³²

Thus, the main purpose of the present work is to challenge the common practices of viewing the relationship between humility and certainty in Luther's early theology, particularly his Lectures on Romans, from the vantage point of his "*Turmerlebnis*" or "tower experience" where he became "evangelical" or viewing humility from the context of Luther's central theology of faith. In the first approach, in addition to the fact that scholars still disagree when or if there was one defining moment or year where Luther crossed the line into his "reformation" theology, there are problems. Analyzing Luther's early theology through an event or events transposed on Luther's life centuries later runs the risk of losing the context on humility and certainty through which Luther, himself, wrote. In 1515, when Luther began lecturing on Romans to his students at Wittenberg, he was unaware of ever becoming "a reformer" and furthermore, was not lecturing from the context of a theology of certainty, regardless of how important it would eventually become in his career.

In the second approach, although agreeing with Hamm and Oberman in that Luther's theology of humility in Romans is not cut off from certainty by the line of demarcation of Luther's Reformation discovery, nonetheless, it is the argument of the present work that the relationship between Luther's theology of humility and certainty must be studied through the vantage point of *humilitas*. Although previous studies have touched on the importance of humility in Luther's Lectures on Romans, they have done

³¹ Hamm, *The Early Luther*, 80.

³² *Ibid.*, 76-77, 98-99.

so through the lense of other theological topics such as faith or assurance of salvation. Thus in the subsequent pages, humility, viewed as “the heart” of Luther’s theology in Romans, will be the context through which other theological topics, particularly certainty, are viewed. Thus, any comments that Luther made regarding certainty must be filtered through his overall intent of emphasizing the necessity of humility in people’s relationship to God, rather than as indications of his developing “reformation” theology. It is the conviction and thesis of the present work that when Luther’s comments on certainty are viewed through his core theme of humility, then Luther’s intentions and *ipsa vox* in his Lectures on Romans will be further clarified.

Chapter 2

Word Analysis of *Humilitas* in Luther's Lectures on Romans

Before analyzing Luther's theology of humility in his Lectures on Romans, it is first necessary to give a context to where Luther was chronologically in his early theological career at the time of his Lectures on Romans. Thus, before the analysis, some background information about Luther's documents before and immediately after his Lectures on Romans as well as the composition of the lectures themselves will be provided for orientation purposes.

When Martin Luther gave his lectures on Romans in 1515-1516, he was a member of the faculty of theology at the University of Wittenberg. Earlier in 1515, Luther had completed his first series of biblical lectures as a lecturer on the Bible at the University of Wittenberg (the post he held from 1512 until his death) on the Psalms from 1513-1515.³³ For his next series of lectures, Luther chose Paul's epistle to the Romans which he lectured on every Monday and Friday morning for three semesters. Unlike some of Luther's other biblical expositions (such as his later lectures on Genesis), copies of both Luther's own lecture notes as well as portions of his student notes exist today.³⁴ Thus, from a textual standpoint, it is likely that scholars have a reliable account of what Luther actually taught from 1515-1516.³⁵

³³ Hilton C. Oswald, "Introduction to Volume 25." in *Luther's Works*, volume 25, American Edition (55 vols; ed. Jaroslav Pelican and Helmut T. Lehmann; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-86), IX.

³⁴ Luther's original Romans manuscript disappeared in the late sixteenth century after Luther's son Paul sold it to the Margrave of Brandenburg, Joachim Frederick in 1594. However, after discovering a copy of Luther's Romans manuscript at the Vatican Library, Johannes Ficker discovered Luther's original manuscript and published it in 1908.

³⁵ Hilton, "Introduction to Volume 25," X.

Although Luther followed the common medieval model of including a gloss and *scholia* of particular passages in Romans, he did not expound Romans using the medieval fourfold interpretative method that included the historical, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical senses of Scripture which he had used previously in his first Lectures on the Psalms. Additionally, throughout Romans, Luther was increasingly critical of several medieval “doctors” (or at least his interpretation of them) such as Duns Scotus and Ockham. Thus, in 1515, as Martin Brecht said, “Luther was still an Augustinian Monk; however he had developed a distaste for scholasticism.”³⁶

Although Martin Brecht was correct in his assertion that Martin Luther’s early theology, especially in his *Dictata* on the Psalms and Lectures on Romans, was diverse and difficult to categorize under one theme,³⁷ humility was certainly a major concern. This was evident from the first line of Luther’s *scholia* in which he stated Paul’s purpose as “to destroy the wisdom and righteousness of the flesh.”³⁸

Word Analysis of *humilitas* in Luther’s Lectures on Romans

In this section, the centrality of humility in Martin Luther’s Lectures on Romans will be demonstrated through a word analysis of *humilitas* (humility) and its different forms and usages throughout the fifteen chapters of Luther’s *scholia*. I will trace Luther’s comments on humility in chronological order starting in Romans 1, noting the corresponding verse in Romans, Luther’s theological point, and the context of Luther’s

³⁶ Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 165.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

³⁸ “Summarium huius Epistole est destruere et euellere et disperdere omnem sapientiam et iustitiam carnis (id est quantacunque potest esse in conspectu hominum, etiam coram nobis ipsis), quantumvis ex animo et synceritate fiant, Et plantare ac constituere et magnificare peccatum (quantumvis ipsum not sit aut esse putabatur).” WA 56. 157, 1-6; LW 25.135.

teaching at the particular mention of humility. After the chronological “unpacking” of Luther’s use of humility, a section of analysis will follow where conclusions will be presented based on Luther’s use of *humilitas*.

In the 371 pages (in the 1938 *Weimar Ausgabe*) of Luther’s commentary and exposition of the fifteen chapters of the epistle to the Romans, Luther used different forms of *humilitas* over 110 times. Only Romans 6 and 15 are void of any form of *humilitas*. In the aforementioned analysis, the various theological themes/topics with which Luther incorporated *humilitas* in the other thirteen chapters will be discussed. However, at this point, it can be said, in anticipation of the analysis, that Luther viewed humility as more than simply one of several topics to discuss or a topic of limited relevance to either Paul or Paul’s audience.

In Romans 1:1, Luther viewed humility as implicit in Paul’s salutation to his Roman audience. Indeed, Luther spent six pages of text on the first six words of Romans 1:1, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ,”³⁹ discussing how Paul’s opening words represented the core intent of Paul’s letter: to destroy any confidence in people’s own wisdom or sense of righteousness in the flesh and to magnify their sense of sin.⁴⁰ Luther’s first explicit mentions of *humilitas* were used in emphasizing that God does not respect any wisdom that comes from people. Thus, people should remain humble in this knowledge and assume that they have no wisdom or goodness of their own. If people will remain

³⁹ “Paulus Seruus Ihesu Christi.” *WA* 56.157, 2; *LW* 25.135.

⁴⁰ “Summarium huius Epistole Est destruere et evellere et disperdere omnem sapientiam et Iustitiam carnis (id est quantacunque potest esse in conspectu hominum, etiam coram nobis ipsis), quantumuis ex animo et synceritate fiant, Et plantare ac constituere et magnificare peccatum (quantumuis ipsum non sit aut esse putabatur).” *WA* 56.157, 1-6; *LW* 25.135.

humble in refusing to consider themselves wise and righteous in their own right, then God will make them wise before people and God.⁴¹

Luther, while remaining on Romans 1:1, displayed Jews and much of the church administration in Rome as examples of people who refuse to accept the humble wisdom of their depravity. Both parties, although perhaps having a semblance of outer humility, nonetheless lack the spiritual humility to see themselves as sinners. Luther characterized these people as lacking the humility that is characteristic in true believers.⁴² In Luther's analysis of "servant" in Romans 1:1, he introduced one of his rare instances of using humility in a negative sense. To Paul's title of "servant," Luther added that servants in this sense must be wise and faithful servants. If wisdom is lacking, the servant will display "foolish humility." Luther explained that humility used in this context demonstrates itself in those who are overly permissive with those who are placed under them. This licentiousness will ultimately breed contempt and disrespect by the servant's underlings.⁴³

However, Luther next emphasized that the servitude that Paul used also implies a humility that precludes the type of overbearing behavior that characterizes tyrants and the prideful. True servants do not "lord" over their charges and take advantage of their

⁴¹ "Sive enim quis ex naturalibus sive ex spiritualibus donis sit coram hominibus Sapiens, Iustus et bonus, Non ideo coram Deo talis reputatur, maxime [si] et ipse se talem reputat. Idcirco in istis omnibus sic oportet se habere in humilitate, quasi adhuc nihil habeat, et nudam misericordiam Dei expectare eum pro Iusto et sapiente reputantis. Quod tunc facit Deus, Si ipse humilis fuerit et non prevenerit Deum Iustificando seipsum et reputando, quod aliquid sit, Ut 1. Corinth. 4.: 'Neque meipsum Iudico. Qui autem me Iudicat, Dominus est, Ideoque Nolite ante tempus iudicare' etc." WA 56.159, 9-17; LW 25.137.

⁴² "Id autem credo potius, Quod ad occasionem fidelium Scripserit, ut haberent tanti Apostoli testimonium sue fidei et doctrine contra Iudeos et Gentes Rome adhuc incredulos et in carne gloriantes contra humilem sapientiam fidelium, quos necesse tunc fuit inter eos conversari et audire et loqui invicem contraria." WA 56.160, 4-8; LW 25.138.

⁴³ "Debet esse 'Seruus prudens et fidelis'. Qui primum non observat, fit idolum, ignavus et indignus illo decore; Ut qui stulta humilitate passim omnibus sunt familiares subditisque sotiales, In quibus necessario perit regendi autoritas et contemptum parit familiaritas." WA 56.160, 19-22; LW 25.139.

authority. Thus, for Luther, servitude entailed both majesty and humility, each with its own danger if viewed in the wrong sense.⁴⁴

Luther's next mentions of humility came from his explanation of Romans 1:3-4: "Concerning His Son, who was made for Him of the seed of David according to the flesh and predestined the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of sanctification by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."⁴⁵ Luther carried on the previous theme of humility and glory going hand in hand from Romans 1:1 through applying it to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Luther first mentioned Christ's humility through his emptying of himself, but also stressed that God also glorified Christ in his humanity.⁴⁶ Thus, for Luther, the Gospel of Jesus Christ first consists of Jesus' humility as the son of God in his kenosis and second, being glorified by the Holy Spirit in his resurrection. The pairing of humility and glory, seeming contradictions, will return in the coming chapters.

In Romans 1:16, "For it is the power of God,"⁴⁷ Luther described the Word as humble, and, thus, a stumbling block to those who are proud or ashamed of it and do not

⁴⁴ "Dicit itaque: 'Seruus Ihesu Christi.' In quo simul est verbo maiestas et humilitas. Humilitas quidem, cum non se dominum et authorem faciat, ut est tyrannorum et superbiorum ingenium, Qui ita potestate utuntur, ut nihil aliud meminisse videantur, quam se potestatem habere, quasi ex eis sit nata et non ab alio receperint. Idcirco non ii gaudent, fructu potestatis, Sed fruuntur potestate solum." WA 56.161, 21-26; LW 25.140.

⁴⁵ "De filio suo, qui factus est ei ex semine David secundum carnem, qui predestinatus est filius Dei in virtute secundum spiritum sanctificationis ex resurrectione mortuorum Ihesu Christi." WA 56.166, 15-17; LW 25.146.

⁴⁶ "Singula ergo vide. 'De filio suo' est evangelium, non absolute de filio Dei, Sed incarnato ex semine David. Et in hoc notatur, quod se exinaniuit et infirmus factus, Et qui ante omnia fuit et omnia fecit, ipse nunc cepit et factus est. Sed non solum Evangelium de humilitate filii Dei loquitur, qua seipsum exinaniuit, immo etiam de gloria et potestate, quam post humilitatem a Deo accepit in humanitate, ita scil., ut sicut filius Dei per humilitatem et exinanitionem sui factus est filius David in carnis infirmitate, Ita econtra filius David infirmus secundum carnem nunc rursus constitutus est et declaratus filius Dei in omni potestate et gloria, Ut sicut se secundum formam Dei Exinaniuit [usque in carnis inanitatem] nascendo in mundum, ita secundum formam serui se impleuit usque in plenitudinem divinitatis ascendendo in celum." WA 56.167, 10-22; LW 25.146-147.

⁴⁷ "Virtus enim Dei est." WA 56.169, 27; LW 25.149.

believe in it. To the “proud,” the Word is nothing but foolishness because what pleases them is not the humble Word but rather the pride of the flesh and the world.⁴⁸ After linking humility to Christ and the Word, Luther moved on to 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed,”⁴⁹ and applied it to temporal rulers. Luther interpreted this verse as Paul speaking against those in power and considered wise. If the powerful and wise in the world are able to be brought to humility, then it is likely that their followers, or the populace at large, will also be humbled.⁵⁰

Luther’s final mention of humility in Romans 1 was quite different from those previously mentioned. It is found under Luther’s exposition of 1:24, “To uncleanness to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves”⁵¹ where Paul was speaking of those who ignored God’s natural order and refuse to acknowledge God’s majesty. Luther mainly interpreted this passage as referring to physical lust and proceeded to explain the various actions that dishonor the body. Luther concluded the section by emphasizing that the physical manifestations of lust seriously “humble”⁵² people because they can destroy chastity, marriage, and beyond in their destruction.⁵³ In this connotation, humility is not

⁴⁸ “Sed tamen ‘Erubescere evangelium’ est vitium et ignavia prelati, contradicere autem vel non audire est vitium et stultitia subditi, dum scil. predicator timet Vel potentiam Vel favorem Vel multitudinem auditorum et tacet necessariam veritatem Et auditor insensatus contemnit uilitatem et humilitatem verbi. WA 56.170, 32, 171, 1-4; LW 25.150-151.

⁴⁹ “Revelatur enim ira Dei.” WA 56.174, 3; LW 25.154.

⁵⁰ “Apostolus precipue contra potentes et sapientes mundi personat, Quia iis humiliatis facile et subiecti et rudes humiliantur, Simul etiam, quia hii maxime restiterunt evangelio et verbo ac vite crucis Christi ceterosque contra [eandem] excitauerunt. Ideo velut ipsis solis culpam imputat et peccatum ac iram Dei denunciat. WA 56.174, 4-8; LW 25.154.

⁵¹ “In Immundiciam, Ut contumeliis afficiant.” WA 56.184, 19; LW 25.165.

⁵² The American Edition translates Luther’s use of “humiliatur” as “dishonored.” See LW 25.166.

⁵³ “Sicut aurei Vasculi est gloria, si ad usum vini nobilis aptetur, Ita Corpus nostrum (quoad istam partem) ordinatum est Vel ad honestas nuptias vel ad honestiorem castitatem. Gravissima autem ignominia

something to be desired, but rather a negative condition brought forth from the dishonorable behavior stemming from lust.

In Romans 2, Luther picked up his use of humility in 2:7, “By patience in well-doing.”⁵⁴ In Paul’s contrast of those who will receive God’s wrath in the final judgment and those who will receive eternal life, Luther saw humility as evident. Those who are “patient” are also humble in their good works. With the linking of humility and patience, Luther introduced another theme that will become familiar throughout Romans: the importance of trials and suffering for developing humility. Luther contrasted those who have humility, and, thus, patiently endure trials, with those who have only a love of themselves and consequently flee from trials. Therefore, since the good works to which Paul refers in 2:7 can only be achieved with an attitude of humility, trials and tribulations are necessary to accomplish any good work.⁵⁵

After 2:7, Luther made his next mention of humility under 2:11, “For there is no respect of persons with God.”⁵⁶ In explaining Paul’s focus on the equal judgment of God on both Jew and Gentile who do evil, Luther gave one of his many “definitions” of true humility: assigning all glory and goodness to God, doing to others as people want done to themselves, and, furthermore, considering their neighbors as superior to themselves. True

humiliatur, si non solum nuptias et castitatem ruperit, Sed etiam ista peiori turpitudine polluatur.” WA 56.184, 28-33; LW 25.166.

⁵⁴ “Secundum patientiam boni operis.” WA 56.193, 22; LW 25.177.

⁵⁵ “Qui querulantur et impatientes sunt, dum beneficientes patiuntur, ostendunt [Vel] hoc eorum benefacere non ex Deo esse, Sed ex humana Iustitia assumptum, qua homo propter se facit bonum, quia querit reputari et honorari per illud, Quia fugit et odit calumniari et diffamari et odiri propter ipsum. Et sic patet evidenter, quod non ex Charitate et humilitate propter solum Deum benefecerit, Sed propter se et suam opinionem [ex occulta superbia et amore sui]. Qui enim ex charitate et humilitate propter Deum operatur, si ex hoc laudatur, dicit: Propter te, o laus, non incepi, ideo propter te nec perficiam. Si vituperatur, dicit: Propter te, o Vituperator, non incepi, propter te non omittam. Et sic amore Dei inceptum prosequitur feliciter munitus a dextris et sinistris.” WA 56.194, 16-26; LW 25.177.

⁵⁶ “Non enim est Acceptio personarum apud Deum.” WA 56.199, 5; LW 25.182.

humility consists of people subjecting themselves, in both desire and action, to all of creation.⁵⁷ Luther acknowledged that although this teaching is brief, it nonetheless is rarely understood in its entirety.⁵⁸ With this “brief” understanding of humility and righteousness in mind, Luther made a statement that could, perhaps, summarize in part, his understanding of the focus of Scripture: “What else does Scripture teach if not humility?”⁵⁹ For Luther at this point, a large portion of Scripture added up to humility.

Luther’s final mention of humility in Romans 2 fell under a conglomeration of verses 22, 25, and 27: “You, who teach that men should not to steal, steal. You, who say one must not commit adultery, you commit adultery⁶⁰ ...circumcision indeed is of value....With the letter of circumcision, you break the Law⁶¹.” Luther viewed these passages as Paul’s attempt to humble the proud and self-righteous and to urge them to admit their sinful condition and thereby realize their need for grace. Thus, being humbled, they seek Christ, confessing themselves as sinners, gaining grace, and

⁵⁷ “Si enim hoc alteri facimus, quod volumus nobis fieri, Et nobis volumus non nisi bona, gloriosa et magna, primum hoc Deo optemus, scil. propriam voluntatem, Iudicium, gloriam et alia, que Dei sunt, a nobis arrogata cum Lucifero; secundo et proximis, quibus superesse querimus. Sint ergo et ipsi nobis superiores, Et ecce totam humilitatem impleuimus tam erga Deum quam homines i.e. totam perfectamque Iustitiam. Quid enim aliud tota Scriptura docet quam humilitatem? qua non solum Deo, Sed omni creature simus subiecti, quia et nos vellemus nobis omnia subiici, licet perversa voluntate, tamen Utcunque perversa est, faciamus hoc aliis, quod secundum eam volumus nobis; iam rectissima et summe perfectionis erit.” WA 56.199, 24-34; LW 25.183.

⁵⁸ “Quid enim brevius et utilius hac parua doctrina? Sed quam raro intelligitur secundum tantam latitudinem!” WA 56.199, 34-35; LW 25.183.

⁵⁹ “Quid enim aliud tota Scriptura docet quam humilitatem?” WA 56.199, 30; LW 25.183.

⁶⁰ “Qui alium, teipsum non doces....Qui predicas non furandum, furaris. Qui dicis non mechandum, mecharis.” WA 56.204, 30, 205, 8-9; LW 25.189.

⁶¹ “Circuncisio quidem prodest...Per literam et circuncisionem legis prevaricator es.” WA 56.206, 22, 24-25; LW 25.191.

becoming saved. Luther's view of humility as something intricately involved in soteriology is another theme seen throughout his Lectures on Romans.⁶²

Luther, near the beginning of his exposition of Romans 3, picked up the link between humility and salvation that he began to discuss in his comments on 2:22, 25, and 27. Throughout the next several pages, Luther gave a progression of the stages of salvation with humility being necessary in each stage. Luther first made mention of humility in 3:4 "Let God be true" (in the *WA*, Luther emphasized "est").⁶³ In this verse (or single word), Luther taught that humility is necessary first to believe in God's Word. Luther stressed that in order for God's Word to have its effect, people must humbly give up their own wisdom and senses.⁶⁴ Thus, in this instance, humility seemed to be a necessity even before faith. Additionally, in 3:5, "but if our wickedness,"⁶⁵ Luther emphasized that confession and repentance, critical for justification, must lead to a humble knowledge of God's exclusive righteousness.⁶⁶

⁶² "Si ergo per gratiam hec fiunt, Cur eos accusat et arguit Apostolus, immo et Dominus ipse? Respondeo: Hoc est totum negocium Apostoli at Domini eius, ut superbos humiliet et ad huius rei agnitionem perducatur et gratia eos indigere doceat, Iustitiam propriam destruat, Ut humiliare Christum requirant, peccatores se confiteantur ac sic gratiam percipiant at salvi fiant." *WA* 56.207, 5-11; *LW* 25.191.

⁶³ "Est autem Deus verax." *WA* 56.212, 2; *LW* 25.197.

⁶⁴ "Sapientia enim nostra non solum verbis Dei non credit neque subiicitur, Sed etiam Verba Dei non esse putat, sed sese verba Dei habere credit et veracem esse presumit. Sicut Iudeorum et hereticorum et omnium cervicosorum hominum est insipientia. Sed et vincit in sermonibus, Quando sermo eius prevalet omnibus contrarium conantibus, sicut factum est cum Evangelio, quod semper triumphat et triumphavit. Veritas enim super omnia vincit. Iustificatur ergo in iis, qui humiliare sensu suo cedunt et huic credunt." *WA* 56. 212, 30-33, 213.1-5; *LW* 25.198.

⁶⁵ "Si autem iniquitas." *WA* 56.214, 22; *LW* 25.200.

⁶⁶ "Aliqui dicunt Iustitiam Dei commendari per nostram Iniustitiam, dum eam punit, quia tunc apparet esse Iustus, qui iniustos non sinit esse impunitos. Et vera est ista sententia. Sed nihil ad propositum Apostoli in hoc loco, [quia non loquitur de Iustitia Dei, qua ipse Iustus est,] Qui potius negat Dei Iustitiam per nostram iniustitiam commendari, Vel Si affirmat, secundum sensum psalmi affirmat, Qui dicit: 'Tibi soli peccavi' etc. Psalmus autem non intendit, Quod peccatum nostrum Iustificet Deum, Sed Confessio et agnitio [peccati] humilians superbum Iustum, qui se Iustum confidit ac per hoc Deo Iustitiam derogat, cuius solius est Iustitia, Sicut et virtus et sapientia et omne bonum." *WA* 56. 214, 23-27, 215, 1-5; *LW* 25.200.

Luther also underscored that people need faith to accept their cognitive limitations when dealing with God's Word as well as to accept their sinful conditions. In describing people's acknowledgement of their true depravity in Romans 3:7, "For God's truthfulness,"⁶⁷ Luther literally placed humility and faith side-by-side in their workings. The recognition of sin brings about further humility which in turn allows people to continuously acknowledge that God alone is righteous and perpetually turn to him alone. In accentuating the importance of the knowledge and acceptance of one's condition, Luther, again, used examples of seeming contradictions: people are not free unless captive, not enriched until they are poor, not strengthened until made weak, and finally, not exalted until humbled.⁶⁸

After the discussion about humility in Romans 3:7, Luther returned to 3:5, "But if our wickedness serves to show the righteousness of God..... as it is written"⁶⁹ In his explanation of Paul's quotation of Psalm 51, Luther returned to the relationship between humility and faith. He explained that even if people are unaware of sin in themselves, they must still believe themselves to be sinners. The same kind of faith that believes in the righteousness of Jesus attributed to people must also believe that they are sinners as well. Thus, through asserting that "faith is the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1), Luther taught that people must also believe themselves to be in sin even when sin

⁶⁷ "Si enim Veritas Dei." WA 56.216, 3; LW 25.201.

⁶⁸ "Ergo humilitate et fide opus est. Que et sola istis verbis queritur et statuitur, Ut penitus nihil fiamus, omnibus evacuemur, exinaniamus nosipsos. [Et cum propheta dicamus: 'tibi soli peccaui, ut Iustificeris in sermonibus tuis'. Tibi Inspiens sum et infirmus, ut tu sapiens et fortis sis in sermonibus tuis.] Quia sic omnis creatura docet. Ubi 'non est opus medico nisi male habentibus, Non queritur ouis nisi que periit, Non liberatur nisi captivus, non locupletatur nisi pauper, non Roboratur nisi infirmus, non exaltatur nisi humiliatus, Non impletur nisi quod vacuum est, Non construitur nisi quod inconstructum est." WA 56.218, 13-21; LW 25.204.

⁶⁹ "Si autem iniustitia nostra Iustitiam Dei commendat....Sicut Scriptum est." WA 56.228, 3, 229, 6; LW 25.212-213.

is unseen. Luther summarized this application of faith as belonging to the humility where “the kingdom of Christ will be.”⁷⁰

Under 3:10, “None is righteous,”⁷¹ Luther pointed out that his aforementioned form of humility is quite rare in people and, consequently, few end up searching for the grace of God. Those who are truly humble consistently implore for the grace of God because of their knowledge of their evil will before God. In viewing themselves as they truly are, people with genuine humility always presume themselves to be sinners, which in turn keeps their humility ever present and their groans for healing persistent until the day of their death, when they are finally made “well.” For Luther, the presumption of sin was in direct antithesis to the presumption of righteousness that characterized the prideful.⁷² Thus, it is always better for people to assume that they do not have the pure love of God in them in order to preserve humility and to continue in their groans for God’s grace.⁷³

⁷⁰ “Etsi nos nullum peccatum in nobis agnoscamus, Credere tamen oportet, quod sumus peccatores. Unde Apostolus: ‘Nihil mihi conscius sum, Sed non in hoc Iustificatus sum.’ Quia sicut per fidem Iustitia Dei vivit in nobis, Ita per eandem et peccatum vivit in nobis, i.e. sola fide credendum est nos esse peccatores, Quia non est nobis manifestum, immo sepius non videmur nobis conscii. Ideo Iudicio Dei standum et sermonibus eius credendum, quibus nos iniustos dicit, quia ipse mentiri non potest. Ac ita esse necesse est, licet appareat; ‘fides enim est argumentum non apparentium’ et solis verbis Dei contenta est. Et in hac humilitate et Iudicio regnum Christi prophetatum est futurum esse.” WA 56.231, 6-15; LW 25.215.

⁷¹ “Non est Iustus quisquam.” WA 56.235, 25; LW 25.220.

⁷² “Verum hic quilibet sibi Videat atque oculos aperiat, diligentissime intendat. Rarus enim est Iustus, quem hic Apostolus querit. Quod ideo fit, Quia raro nos ita discutimus profunde, ut hanc voluntatis infirmitatem, immo pestem agnoscamus. Ideoque raro humiliamur, raro gratiam Dei recte querimus, quia non intelligimus, ut hic dicit. Adeo enim subtilis est ista pestis, ut etiam a spiritualissimis viris non possit plene attingi. ideo qui Iusti sunt vere, non solum gemunt et implorant gratiam Dei, quia se vident habere voluntatem malam ac per hoc peccatum coram Deo, Sed etiam, Quia vident se nunquam posse plene videre, quam profunde et quousque mala sit eorum voluntas. ideo credunt semper se esse peccatores, Velut voluntatis male infinita sit profunditas. Sic humiliantur, sic plorant, sic gemunt, donec perfecti sanentur, quod fit in morte.” WA 56.235, 25-37; LW 25.220-221.

⁷³ “Et, Ubi hoc Invenirent, sicut necesse est Invenire et cum non sit in nobis, id, quod melius est, presumendum, Sed quod malum, utpote qui naturaliter sumus es nobis mali, certe timerent, humiliarentur et

After discussing the importance of the “presumption of sin” for the sake of humility, Luther mentioned humility in the context of 3:11, “No one seeks God.”⁷⁴ He returned to the theme from Romans 1:3-4 about the necessity of humble faith for seeking God in contrast to people’s own wisdom.⁷⁵ According to Luther, in 3:12, “All have turned aside; together they have gone wrong,”⁷⁶ Paul was referring to those who seek righteousness in their own prideful wisdom and despise the humility that is necessary to believe the truth.⁷⁷ In 3:13, “Their throat is an open grave,”⁷⁸ Luther viewed the fruit of those who teach from their own wisdom as a lack of humility in their students. Instead of chastising and humbling their audiences into seeing themselves as insignificant and urging them toward repentance, they teach lies to please people. The end result for these people is ruin. They are crushed to pieces, reduced, and humbled in both body and spirit, as was done to the Jews. However, Luther made it clear that the humility brought about

gratiam Dei semper querulis gemitibus quererent ac sic semper proficerent.” *WA* 56.236, 21-24; *LW* 25.221-222.

⁷⁴ “Non est requirens Deum.” *WA* 56.237, 29; *LW* 25.223.

⁷⁵ “Scil. tam de iis, qui manifeste Deum videntur non querere, quam de iis, qui requirunt seu potius sibi videntur querere, quia non querunt, quomodo Deus uult queri et Inveni, Scil. per fidem [in humilitate] et non per propriam sapientiam in presumptione.”

“Hoc totum moraliter fit in omnibus superbis et sui sensus hominibus, precipue, si in iis rebus contingat, que ad Deum pertinent et ad salutem anime. Hic enim Deus loquitur, Sed ita loquitur, Ut neque persona neque locus neque tempus neque verbum talis appareat superbis, quod Deus per illam et in talibus loquatur. Ideoque recedunt Vel resistunt increduli pariter et insipientes, et saltem corde dicunt: ‘Non est Deus ibi’ etc., Quia non nisi humilis suscipit verbum Dei.” *WA* 56. 237, 30-31, 238,1-2., 240 13-19; *LW* 25.223-2226.

⁷⁶ “Omnes declinauerunt, Simul inutiles facti sunt.” *WA* 56.240, 20; *LW* 25.226.

⁷⁷ “‘Omnes’ scil. filii hominum, qui nondum sunt filii Dei per fidem geniti ‘ex aqua et spiritu sancto’. Et horum aliqui declinant ad sinistram, qui diuitiis, honoribus, voluptatibus, potestatibus huius seculi seruiunt. Alii Vero ad dextram, qui Iustitiis et virtutibus ac sapientiis propriis student deserta Iustitia et obedientia Dei in spirituali superbia humilitatem impugnantes veritatis.” *WA* 56.240, 21-26; *LW* 25.226.

⁷⁸ “Sepulchrum patens est Guttur eorum.” *WA* 56.242, 1; *LW* 25.227.

by the destruction of the sinner's pride is the only type of humility that leads to repentance and salvation.⁷⁹

Luther continued on this train of thought in 3:17, "The way of peace they do not know."⁸⁰ Humility that leads to salvation comes from the fear of God, which is the opposite of seeing oneself as being righteous from the Law. The fear of God humbles all, and thus, makes people capable of all, another seeming "contradiction" since it is when people see themselves as incapable of anything good that they are now able to do good.⁸¹ A few verses later, in 3:20, "By the works of the Law,"⁸² Luther returned to the premise of worldly wisdom in contrast to humble faith by stressing that people, in humility, must give up their own wisdom and senses in order to believe the truth about themselves described in the Word since the humble truth is contrary to the prideful wisdom in people.⁸³ Luther, again, viewed the Jews as an example of a people who refuse to cede their own senses and admit their culpability before God. The Jews, time and again, persecuted prophets sent by God to warn the Jews of their sin because the prophet's dire message was displeasing to the Jews's ears and went against their opinions of their own

⁷⁹ "Item Alia Causa, Quia tales doctores non mordent, non ruminant et conterunt i.e. non arguunt, non humiliant, non ad penitentiam inducunt, non destruunt et frangunt eos. Sed sicut sunt, integros in sua perfidia deglutiunt, Ut Trenorum 1.: 'Prophete tui non aperuerunt tibi peccata tua, Ut te ad penitentiam provocarent.' Arguere enim peccatorem verbis et castigare, hoc est dentibus eum molere, Usque dum minutulus et mollis fiat (i.e. humilis et mitis). WA 56.243, 5-11; LW 25.229.

⁸⁰ "Viam pacis [Non cognouerunt]." WA 56.246, 11; LW 25.232.

⁸¹ "Sed omnium predictorum Causa est Superbia, que reddit incapacissimos. Timor enim Dei humiliat omnia, humilitas autem capacem facit omnium. Ideo illi nihil capiunt, quia sunt superbi, ideo autem superbiunt, quia non timent Deum." WA 56.246, 20-24; LW 25.232-233.

⁸² "ex operibus legis." WA 56.248, 5-6; LW 25.234.

⁸³ "Ita et superbus quisque in suo sensu semper opponit se Vel precepto Vel consilio recte monentis ad salutem. Cui cum non credit, similiter nihil credit et perit tota fides propter unius sensus pertinaciam. Semper ergo cedendum sensui nostro humiliter, ne offendamus in hanc petram offensionis i.e. veritatem humiliter nobis obviam et adversariam sensui nostro." WA 56.250, 3-8; LW 25.236.

righteousness. Rather than persecuting the prophets, the Jews should have heeded their message and admitted themselves guilty before God.⁸⁴

Next, Luther made several references to humility under Romans 3:22, “The righteousness of God through faith.”⁸⁵ In this context, Luther returned to his focus on the “presumption of sin,” but also introduced certainty or assurance of justification in relation to humility. People are unable to know whether they believe the entire Word of God or secretly deny parts of it in their hearts (more of this idea will be described in a subsequent section on certainty in Romans). This uncertainty regarding people’s faith should lead to extreme humility. Since people cannot be sure whether they truly believe, and thus, are justified, they must still consider themselves sinners in desperate need of God’s grace. It is in this humility that people continuously cry out to God and receive his grace.⁸⁶

Unfortunately for the prideful, they do not understand or experience the initial humility necessary to call out to God and miss out on God’s grace that is granted to the humble. For Luther, even when God’s Word seems to go against their own ideas and senses, people must humbly submit to every part of God’s Word.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ “Et omnes Iudei persecuti sunt prophetas, quia eis mala et contraria, quam placeret eorum sensui, nunciabant, cum hec humiliter potius suscipere deberent et se reos agnoscere coram Deo.” WA 56.250, 33-34, 251, 1-2; LW 25.237.

⁸⁵ “Iustitia autem Dei per fidem.” WA 56.251, 11; LW 25.237.

⁸⁶ “Si in una hostia neges Christum, in omnibus negasti.

Que cum ita sint, in immensum nos oportet humiliari. Quia cum non possimus scire, an in omni verbo Dei vivamus aut nullum negemus (cum multa a prelato, multa a fratribus, multa in evangelio et Apostolis, multa interne nobis a Deo dicantur) nunquam scire possumus, an Iustificati simus, an credamus. Idcirco, tanquam opera nostra sint opera legis estimemus, ut humiliter peccatores simus in sola misericordia eius Iustificari cupientes. Quamquam enim certi simus nos in Christum credere, non tamen certi sumus nos in omnia, que ipsius sunt, Verba credere. ac per hoc etiam ‘in ipsum Credere’ incertum est.

Quia et in prophetis nihil arguitur, quam quod vox Domini non auditur a populo suo. Qui autem sic timuerit et humiliter confessus fuerit, dabitur ei gratia, ut Iustificetur et dimittatur peccatum, si quid forte per occultam et ignoratam incredulitatem fecerit.” WA 56.252, 15-29; LW 25.238-239.

In his explanation of another segment of Romans 3:22, “Through faith in Jesus Christ,”⁸⁸ Luther continued to highlight the contrary nature in which Christ speaks to people. Christ comes to people not in the appearance of glory but rather in humility and gentleness, which is contrary to people’s natural wisdom. Just as the Holy Spirit, in Psalm 44, exhorts the hearer to “consider, and incline your ear,”⁸⁹ it is people’s duty to humbly listen to and to be taught by the voice of Christ.⁹⁰ Luther, in going back to verse 3:21, “the Law bears witness,”⁹¹ quoted Psalm 51 to explain that those who have a humble (American edition translates it “contrite”⁹²) heart will not be turned away by God. Thus, humility is necessary for any acceptance by God.⁹³

Luther concluded his mention of humility in Romans 3 with verse 27, “On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith.”⁹⁴ He gave a concise summary of his ideas of humility as mentioned prior in verses 3:20, 22 by concluding that people who ultimately think they fulfil the Law through works are

⁸⁷ “Superbus Vero, qui hanc humilitatem ignorat et tantam fidei subtilitatem non intelligit, Sed se credere putat et omnem fidem possidere perfecte, non potest audire vocem Domini, resistit autem ei tanquam false, quia contraria sue sententie tanquam vere.” *WA* 56.253, 3-6; *LW* 25.239.

⁸⁸ “per fidem Hiesu Christi.” *WA* 56.255, 20; *LW* 25.242.

⁸⁹ “Audi, filia, et vide et inclina aurem tuam.” *WA* 56.256, 20-21; *LW* 25.243.

⁹⁰ “Prope enim est nobis et in nobis, Verum, non nisi in specie peregrina, non in specie glorie, Sed in humilitate et mansuetudine etc., ita ut ipse non esse putetur, qui tamen est vere. Unde precipit Spiritus sanctus: ‘Audi, filia, et vide et inclina aurem tuam’ etc., q.d. opus est, Ut semper et ubique promptus sis audire et aure inclinata incedere, totum officium tuum sit audire humiliter et doceri. Sicut et ps.2.: ‘Et nunc, reges, intelligite, Erudimini.’” *WA* 56.256, 17-23; *LW* 25.242.

⁹¹ “Testificata a Lege.” *WA* 56.256, 24; *LW* 25.243.

⁹² *LW* 25.247.

⁹³ “Igitur hoc solo salui sumus, Quod peccatum habentes et in peccato viventes dolemus ipsum habere et gemimus ad Deum pro liberatione, secundum illud Iohann.: ‘Si dixerimus, quia peccatum non habemus, nos ipsos seducimus et veritas in nobis non est. Si autem confessi fuerimus, fidelis est, qui dimittat nobis peccata nostra et mundet nos ab omni iniquitate.’ Ita, Ita ‘Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus, cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus non despiciet.’” *WA* 56.260, 5-11; *LW* 25.247.

⁹⁴ “Per quam Legem? factorum? Non, Sed per legem fidei.” *WA* 56.263, 30; *LW* 25.251.

prideful. People's reliance on external deeds indicates a lack of humility and a skewed view of themselves. Indeed, those who are truly righteous know that they cannot fulfil the Law, see themselves as vile in their own eyes, and in their humility consistently ask for God's assistance. Thus, the Law was given not for its fulfilment through works, but rather to convince people of their "vile" and helpless condition, in other words, for humility.⁹⁵

In Romans 4, all of Luther's references to humility fell underneath 4:7, "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven."⁹⁶ Preceding his first mention of humility, Luther explained that the Church is ultimately the inn for the spiritually sick. No one is yet fully righteous; rather, God is preparing people to be a "habitation" for righteousness through cleansing them of sin.⁹⁷ However, Luther also pointed out that most theologians were not teaching that preparation for righteousness is through humility in constant groans and an awareness of sin.⁹⁸ According to Luther, this neglect is harmful because it is only through

⁹⁵ "Lex factorum necessario inflat et gloriationem ponit, Quia qui Iustus est et legem Impleuit, sine dubio habet, unde gloriatur et superbiat. At illi se eiusmodi credunt esse, Quia ad extra fecerunt, que lex statuit et prohibuit. Ideo non humiliantur, non vilescunt sibi tanquam peccatores. Non querunt Iustificari, non gemunt pro Iustitia, quia adeptam se possidere confidunt.

Unde Notandum, Sicut Supra ex b. Augustino dictum est, Quod 'lex operum dicit: fac, quod Iubeo, lex fidei autem: da, quod Iubes'. Ac per hoc populus legis Respondet legi et Deo in lege dicenti: feci, quod Iussisti, factum est, ut imperasti. Populus autem fidei dicit: Non possum facere, non feci, sed da, quod Iubes; Non feci, Sed desydero facere. Et quia non possum, peto et quero a te, unde possum. Ac per hoc ille superbus et gloriosus efficitur, hic autem humilis et vilis sibiipsi." WA 56.263, 31-32, 264, 1-12; LW 25.251.

⁹⁶ "Beati, quorum remisse." WA 56.268, 26; LW 25.257.

⁹⁷ "Ecclesia Stabulum est et infirmaria egrotantium et sanandorum. Celum vero est palatium sanorum et Iustorum." WA 56.275, 27-28; LW 25.263.

⁹⁸ "Ubi nostri theologi peccatum ad sola opera deflexerunt Et ea solum inceperunt docere, quibus opera caveantur, Non, quomodo per gemitum humiliter gratiam sanantem querant et se peccatores agnoscant. Ideo necessario superbos faciunt, et qui dimissis operibus ad extra iam se Iustos perfecte putent, Nihil solliciti sint et concupiscentiis bellum indicere per Iuge suspirium ad Dominum." WA 56.276, 6-11; LW 25.263.

humble groans that people are reputed righteous and their deeds subsequently approved.⁹⁹ People who think that they can perfectly fulfil the Law have not yet been humbled, which actually precludes them from being able to fulfil the Law.¹⁰⁰

Thus, for Luther, the very center of hypocrisy is people having certainty in being righteous. In fact, those who are righteous do not have certainty in their righteousness. God purposefully leaves the desire for sin, or the “fomes peccati,” inside people in order for them to perpetually return to his grace.¹⁰¹ Luther described it another way when he explained that people are both “unleavened,” having their sins not being imputed to them by God, yet also being actively cleansed.¹⁰² Luther stated that the only way God does not impute people’s sins to them is through the humility of faith.¹⁰³ Thus, again, Luther emphasized the importance of humility in relation to faith and justification.

⁹⁹ “Nam illi utique, quibus ea opera sunt reputata et commendata, non ideo fecerunt, ut reputarentur, immo ignorauerunt, an reputarentur a Deo, Sed egerunt, quod potuerunt, in humili fide, semper petentes grata esse Deo secundum misericordiam suam, que agerent. Et sic ipsis primo reputatis propter humilem fidei gemitum postea reputata et Approbata sunt et opera.” WA 56.276, 29-35; LW 25.264.

¹⁰⁰ “Cum ideo Deus gratiam offerat miseris, quia legem suam non implere nos posse videt, ut ex ea impleamus, Nondum illi sunt humiliati, nondum sciunt, Quod lex nec [secundum] substantiam facti (ut ipsi dicunt) impleri potest.” WA 56.279, 10-13; LW 25.266.

¹⁰¹ “Mater igitur hipocritarum et Causa hipocrisis est ipsa securitas. Deus enim ideo nos in peccato isto, in fomite, in concupiscentia derelinquit, Ut nos in timore sui et humilitate custodiat, ut sic ad eius gratiam semper recurramus, Semper pavidi, ne peccemus [i.e. semper orantes, ne nobis imputet et peccatum dominari sinat].” WA 56.281, 4-9; LW 25.268.

¹⁰² “Sic Apostolus: ‘Expurgate vetus fermentum, ut sitis noua conspersio, sicut estis azymi.’ Quis enim eorum intelliget ista duo simul, quod sint azymi et tamen expurgandum sit eis fermentum vetus? Nisi quia unum in re vera, Sed aliud propter humilitatem fidei in timore, in spe et non-Imputatione Dei consistit.” WA 56.282, 8-12; LW 25.269.

¹⁰³ “De quo psalmus: ‘Singularis fesus depastus est eum.’

Igitur Sensus psalmi est: Beatus (singulariter enim est in Hebreo), qui Levatur crimine [i.e. Pescha] (i.e. cui remittuntur sua scelera et crimina, peccata actualia, prevaricationes, quas operatur malum fomitis) et quorum tecta sunt peccata; Hebreus: qui sive cuius tegitur peccatum i.e. scil. ipse fomes, per non-Imputationem Dei propter humilitatem et gemitum fidei pro ipso.” WA 56.284, 8-14; LW 25.271.

In Romans 5, Luther made his first allusion to humility under 5:3, particularly “In our sufferings,”¹⁰⁴ where Paul demonstrated the benefits of suffering with the end result being hope. Here, Luther explained that tribulations simply magnify what is already in people. For worldly people, tribulation makes them sicker, prouder, and weaker. However, when spiritual people undergo trials, they become stronger and more humble.¹⁰⁵

In 5:14, “Adam is a type of the One who was to come,”¹⁰⁶ Luther, after discussing the nature of original sin, explained that present sins are of as much concern as past sins. For Luther, the purpose of sin remaining in people, similar to what he said under Romans 4:7, was for the sake of humility. Nobody can consider themselves better off than their neighbor because present sin is clearly evident in all. Furthermore, people who do look down on neighbors struggling in sin lack humility and have twice as much sin in them.¹⁰⁷

Having no specific mention of “humility” in Romans 6, Luther picked up his comments on humility under Romans 7:1, “The Law is binding on a person.”¹⁰⁸ After first establishing that Paul spoke of the Law in the spiritual sense, i.e. sin,¹⁰⁹ Luther

¹⁰⁴ “Tribulationibus.” WA 56.300, 9; LW 25.288.

¹⁰⁵ “Qualia et qualem Invenit tribulatio, talia ac talem magis facit, Ut si est carnalis et infirmus, cecus, malus, iracundus, superbus, etc., tentatione veniente fit carnalior, infirmior, cecior, peior, iracundior, superbior etc. Econtra si est spiritualis, fortis, Sapiens, Bonus, mitis, humilis, fit spiritualior, fortior, sapientior, melior, mitior, humilior, psalmo 4.: ‘In tribulatione dilatasti mihi.’ Sed de illis Matt. 7: ‘Venerunt flumina et venti et irruerunt in domum et facta est ruina eius magna.’” WA 56.301, 2-9; LW 25.288.

¹⁰⁶ “Adam est forma futuri.” WA 56.311, 14; LW 25.298.

¹⁰⁷ “Sed Ecce sunt etiam manifeste presentia, que nec surreptionem superbie, Iudicii alterius complacentie (quod illa sepissime solent), sinunt in nobis dominari. Quia Aperta Causa humilitatis est, Quod peccatum in nobis manet, Sed ‘non dominatur nobis’, Quia subiectum est spiritui, ut ipse destruat ipsum, Quod prius regnavit super ipsum.” WA 56.314, 1-6; LW 25.301.

¹⁰⁸ “Quia Lex in homine dominatur.” WA 56.334, 2; LW 25.322.

¹⁰⁹ “Patet itaque, Quod Apostolus non methaphysice neque moraliter de lege loquitur, Sed spiritualiter et theologice, ut supra satis dictum est c.4., scil. Quoad interiorem hominem et voluntatem

explained the futility of trying to fulfil the Law through the labor of works in people's own power. For Luther, this was a clear sign that they are foolish and spurn the humility necessary to seek God's grace.¹¹⁰ Under 7:6, "Not under the old written code,"¹¹¹ Luther mentioned humility under his distinction between The Old and New Law. The Old Law admonishes the proud in their own righteousness saying, "You must have Christ and the Spirit," whereas the New Law, offered to those who, with true humility, admit their depravity, says "Behold, here is Christ and His Spirit."¹¹²

Next, Luther gave another general "definition" of true humility under Romans 7:24, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?"¹¹³ Luther viewed Paul's apparent self-castigation as the perfect illustration of humility. This verse was an example of someone who has perfect knowledge of himself, thus, perfect humility. Rather than dealing with earthly knowledge or wisdom, perfect knowledge for Luther was having an accurate perception of one's spiritual condition, a familiar theme so far.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, under 7:17, "It is no longer I that do it.... but sin which dwells

respicit, non quoad opera in exteriori homine respicit. Et suis familiaribus propositionibus velut fundamentis atque principiis intellectis facilia sunt omnia reliqua. Quarum prima est: Peccatum et ira est per legem." WA 56.334, 3-9; LW 25.322.

¹¹⁰ "Ideo mirabili stultitia hipocrite se affligunt multis laboribus et in operibus mutandis student, antequam gratiam mutationis sue proprie humiliter implorent." WA 56.335, 16-18; LW 25.323.

¹¹¹ "Non in Vetustate Litere." WA 56.336, 24; LW 25.324.

¹¹² "Hec est rata differentia veteris et noue legis, Quod vetus dicit superbis in sua Iustitia: tu debes habere Christum et spiritum eius; Noua dicit humiliatis in sua eiusmodi paupertate et Christum petentibus: Ecce hic est Christus et spiritus eius." WA 56.338, 27-30; LW 25.327.

¹¹³ "Infelix ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius?" WA 56.346, 16-17; LW 25.335.

¹¹⁴ "Hoc expressius (7:24) quam precedentia spiritualem indicat hominem, Quia gemit ac dolet ac liberari cupit. Sed certe nullus se infelicem asserit, nisi qui spiritualis est. Perfecta enim cognitio sui ipsius perfecta humilitas est, perfecta autem humilitas perfecta sapientia est, perfecta sapientia perfecta spiritualitas est." WA 56.346, 17-21; LW 25.335.

within me,”¹¹⁵ Luther reemphasized what he had said prior under Romans 4 and 5: sin remains in the spiritual man in order for humility to stand firm against pride and presumptuousness and for grace to be continually exercised.¹¹⁶

Luther made his first reference to humility in Romans 8 under a section of 8:3, “For sin he condemned sin.”¹¹⁷ Using Paul’s explanation of how Jesus’ death freed people from sin and the Law, Luther spoke against the belief held by some medieval theologians that people can love God above all else in their own natural capacities (*ex puris naturalibus*). Luther viewed this belief as contrary to the principle that the Law was given to bring the proud to humility and turn them from any presumption of their own virtue.¹¹⁸

After 8:3, Luther made his next mention to humility under 8:7, “The wisdom of the flesh is hostile to God.”¹¹⁹ As we have seen, the theme of the wisdom of God versus the wisdom of the flesh was frequently used by Luther in regard to humility. However, in this instance, Luther combined it with another concept he discussed in Romans 7—false humility—which tries to change actions without an acknowledgement of one’s

¹¹⁵ “Nunc autem non ego operor...Sed quod habitat in me peccatum.” WA 56.349, 22, 26; LW 25.338.

¹¹⁶ “Igitur peccatum est in spirituali homine relictum ad exercitium gratie, ad humilitatem superbie, ad repressionem presumptionis; Quod qui non sedule studuerit expugnare, sine dubio iam habet, etiamsi nihil amplius peccauerit, unde damnetur.” WA 56.350, 5-8; LW 25.339.

¹¹⁷ “De peccato, damnauit peccatum.” WA 56.358, 24; LW 25.348.

¹¹⁸ “Ideo iterum hic arguuntur, qui dicunt voluntatem posse elicere actum dilectionis Dei super omnia ex puris naturalibus. Et Argumentum eorum futile est dicentium: Quicquid intellectus potest dictare volendum et faciendum, potest voluntas velle; Sed intellectus dictat Deum diligendum super omnia, ergo voluntas potest velle idem. Respondetur, quod male concluditur et subsumitur. Sed sic concludendum: ergo voluntas potest velle Deum esse diligendum super omnia, sicut dictauit. Ex quo non sequitur, quod potest diligere Deum super omnia, Sed solum tenui motu velle, ut hoc fieret i.e. voluntatulam voluntatis habere, que dictata est habenda.

Alioquin frustra dicerent communiter omnes, Quod Lex data est, ut humiliaret superbos de virtute sua presumentes.” WA 56.359, 12-23; LW 25.348-349.

¹¹⁹ “Sapientia Carnis Inimica est Deo.” WA 56.361, 4; LW 25.350.

helplessness. Under the current passage, Luther admitted that the wisdom of the flesh produces a semblance of humility through the abandonment of worldly riches and a devotion to prayer and study. However, under the prudence of the flesh, these seemingly pious behaviors always result in vain honor and glorification. True humility is the only way to avoid these pitfalls.¹²⁰

Under 8:16, “For it is the Spirit Himself,”¹²¹ Luther quoted Bernard of Clairvaux, who explained that the Spirit’s testimony regarding works is twofold in that people believe that their works are acceptable to God, yet simultaneously know that their works *per se* mean nothing before God. This overall humility regarding works is what makes them acceptable to God.¹²²

¹²⁰ “Sane sunt, Qui divitiis renunciantes paupertatem profitentur, et anima eorum iam laqueum istum evasit; Sed ecce cadit in peiorem, sc. in proprium sensum Vel devotionem aut Iustitiam aut Scientiam, stadium, Vel levius, in honorem et vanam gloriam etc. Ideo multis laboribus opus est, ut ‘prudencia carnis’, tam multis laqueis irretita, per prudentiam spiritus superetur continuis precibus et lachrymis.

Hii sunt laquei, quos S. Anthonius Vidit in mundo et gemens dixit: Quis potest [hos omnes] evadere? Et Responsum audiuit: ‘Sola humilitas.’” WA 56.363, 8-15; LW 25.352.

¹²¹ “Ipse enim spiritus testimonium.” WA 56.369, 26; LW 25.359.

¹²² “Quod testimonium istud sit ipsa fiducia cordis in Deum, preclarissime ostendit B. Bernardus, plenus eodem spiritu, sermone de annunciatione 1. dicens: ‘Hoc testimonium in tribus consistere puto. Necessesse est enim primo omnium credere, quod remissionem peccatorum habere non possis nisi per indulgentiam Dei. Deinde, quod nihil prorsus habere queas boni operis, nisi [et] hoc dederit ipse. Postremo, quod eternam vitam nullis potes operibus promereri, nisi gratis detur et illa.’ Verum hec non omnino sufficiunt, Sed magis initium quoddam et velut fundamentum fidei habenda sunt. Ideo si credis peccata tua non deleri nisi ab eo, benefacis. Sed adde adhuc: ut et hoc credas, [non quod possis tu, Sed necesse est, ut spiritus faciat te hoc credere.] ‘quia per ipsum peccata tibi donantur. Hoc est testimonium, quod perhibet in corde nostro spiritus sanctus dicens: Dimissa sunt tibi peccata tua. Sic enim arbitratur Apostolus hominem Iustificari per fidem’ (assertive de te ipso etiam, non tantum de electis credere, Quod Christus pro peccatis tuis mortuus sit et satisfecit). ‘Ita de meritis quoque, si credis non posse haberi nisi per ipsum, Non sufficit, donec testimonium perhibeat spiritus veritatis, quia habes ea per ipsum.’ id fit, quando opera, que facis, confidis Deo esse accepta et grata, quecunque sint illa tandem. Confidis autem ea esse grata, quando sentis te [per] ea opera nihil esse coram Deo, licet bona sint et in obedientia facta, Quia non facis ea, que sunt mala. Et ista humilitas et compunctio in bonis operibus facit ea esse grata.” WA 56.369, 27-28, 370, 1-20; LW 25.359-360.

Luther's next use of humility is unique in his Lectures on Romans. In his exposition of part of 8:27, "He knows what is in the mind of the Spirit,"¹²³ Luther explained that when the apostle, in 8:26, said, "We do not know how to pray,"¹²⁴ he was not indicating that Christians are asking for inappropriate things but rather things too small and humble. In this sense, "humble" refers to something too menial¹²⁵ or "insignificant," as the American Edition translates it.¹²⁶

Luther made his final allusions to humility in Romans 8 under part of 8:28, "who are called according to His purpose."¹²⁷ Under this verse, Luther linked humility to God's election of some people for condemnation. The prudence of the flesh only seeks self-glorification and objects to the doctrine of God's election of the condemned. However, humility is necessary to accept this doctrine since only God's Word is believed by those who are humble. Luther continued by asserting that uncertainty about election is a positive attitude since it fosters humility in people. It is through such fear that God's grace works and rejoices.¹²⁸

¹²³ "Scit, quid desideret spiritus." WA 56.379, 22-23; LW 25.369.

¹²⁴ "Nam Quid oremus, nescimus." WA 56.375, 1; LW 25.369.

¹²⁵ "Et Notandum, Quod Apostolus hoc Verbo 'nescimus, quid oremus' Non vult dicere, Quod contraria Vel noxia petant Sancti et boni homines, Sed quod nimis parua et humilia Seu inferiora petunt, quam Deus dare vult." WA 56.379, 26-27, 380, 1-2; LW 25.369.

¹²⁶ LW 25.369.

¹²⁷ "Qui secundum propositum vocati sunt." WA 56.383, 34; LW 25.373.

¹²⁸ "Igitur Etsi iis non directe adhuc sint dulcia ista verba perfectissimi et solidissimi cibi, Interim tamen per antiperistasim [i.e. contrarii circumstantiam] sunt eis mitia et consolatoria. Sic Scil., Quia Nulla sunt verba efficaciora ad terrendum, Humiliandum et superbam presumptionem de meritis destruendum quam ista. Qui autem timent et paudent ad illa, optimum et felix signum habent, Quia dicit Scriptura: 'Super quem requiescet spiritus meus nisi super humilem et trementem sermones meos?' Hiis etiam dicit Christus: 'Nolite timere, pusillus grex, placuit patri vestro dare vobis regnum.' Et Esa. 40.: 'Dicite.' Nisi enim vidisset eos contraria cogitare, scil. pavorem et desperationem regni, non utique dixisset: Pusillanimes, Confortamini, Ecce Deus vester'. Et iterum: 'Beatus vir, qui timet Dominum.' Et Ubique in Scripturis huiusmodi paventes ad verbum Dei commendantur et confortantur. Desperant enim de seipsis et verbum

Luther further established the link between humility and election in his many comments on humility in Romans 9. However, before speaking further on humility and election, he first began with 9:6, “For not all who are descended from Israel,”¹²⁹ and, again, viewed Paul as intending to destroy the presumption of righteousness and any pride the Jews had regarding their status as God’s chosen people through their works. He echoed Paul in emphasizing that flesh, alone, does not make someone an heir of God’s promise. Only when people, especially Jews, become humble do they become eligible for God’s grace and spirit.¹³⁰

Luther picked up again on the theme of election and humility in 9:14, the famous question and answer of Paul regarding election, “Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means!”¹³¹ Luther focused on Paul’s lack of a response (other than Paul’s quotation of Exodus 33:9, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy”) to God’s seeming election

Dei facit opus suum i.e. pavorem Dei in illis. Quia sicut ii, qui ad verbum Dei indurantur atque confidunt, pessimum signum habent, Ita Qui trepidant ad ipsum et terrentur, optimum signum habent; [sicut Scriptum psalmo 143.: ‘Emitte sagittas tuas conturbabis eos.’]

Igitur Si quis nimie timet se non esse electum vel tentatur de electione sui, cum tali timore gratias agat [et gaudeat se timere], Sciens cum fiducia, quoniam Deus mentiri non potest, qui dixit: ‘Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus’ i.e. desperatus, ‘cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias.’” WA 56.387, 2-24; LW 25.377.

¹²⁹ “Non omnes, qui sunt ex Israel.” WA 56.394, 6; LW 25.384.

¹³⁰ “Hoc Contra Iudeorum presumptionem et ad commendationem gratie atque ad destruendam omnem superbam fiduciam Iustitie et bonorum operum. Quia Iudei ideo filii regni volunt haberi, quia sunt filii Abrahe. Contra quos Invincibili arguit argumento, primum, Quod nec ipsissimi possunt negare. Quia si vera esset eorum presumptio, tunc etiam Ismael et filii Cethure essent heredes Abrahe et merito eiusdem dignitatis cum Isaac, cuius contrarium aperte textus habet. Frustra ergo et ipsi contendunt esse eiusdem dignitatis cum Isaac, Quia sunt et ipsi filii Abrahe. Non sequitur enim hoc, ut clare patet. Quod Si obiecerint et dixerint Ismael et ceteros merito non esse eiusdem dignitatis cum Isaac, Tum, quia fuerunt mali et suo peccato meruerunt privari dignitate, tum Secundo, Quia fuerunt ex eadem matre Sara: Iis occurrit alio Exemplo, Non solvens ac quasi concedens obiecta, quamquam non legantur alii filii Cethure peccasse Et solum semel Ismael. Sed concessio isto, quod non ex eadem matre: Quid de Rebecca? Eadem mater, primo; ex eodem patre, Secundo; Tercio deinde: duo fratres, Neuter adhuc bonus Vel malus, Et tamen unus in filium, alter in servum sine merito utriusque vocatur. Ergo Invincibiliter sequitur, Quod Caro non facit filios Dei et heredes promissionis, Sed electio et gratia Dei. Sic, Sic ergo humilata superbia carnis potest nasci spiritus et gratia Dei.” WA 56.394, 7-26; LW 25.384-385.

¹³¹ “Nunquid Iniustitia est apud Deum? Absit.” WA 56.396, 8; LW 25.386.

of some to destruction.¹³² It is the proud and arrogant who Paul assumed would ask this question and thus the response is addressed to them. However, to those with true humility, God's sovereign election is sweet grace because those who are humble already despair of their condition before God, and thus, God accepts them.¹³³ Under 9:15, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,"¹³⁴ Luther emphasized that nobody can know on whom God will have mercy. People cannot be certain through merits, works, or any other means that they are one of God's elect. For Luther, this fear and uncertainty is critical to true humility.¹³⁵

Luther continued on the contrast of attitudes between the proud and the humble regarding God's election in 9:19, "Why does he still find fault?"¹³⁶ In this verse Paul, again, anticipated an objection to God's election of some to be condemned. The proud murmur and complain about God's decisions and justice. However, those who have humility focus on their own depravity and ask God why they have been made in such a reprobate condition. Since the person obviously recognizes his sinful state before God, and since God is not an "impatient or cruel god," questions such as these are permitted.¹³⁷

¹³² "Miserebor, cui misertus sum." WA 56.396, 10; LW 25.386.

¹³³ "Apostolus Nullam aliam rationem assignat, Quare non sit Iniustitia apud Deum, quam Quia dicit: 'Miserebor, cui misertus sum.' Quod est idem quod: Miserebor, cui voluero, Vel cui predestinatum est misereri.

Que est dura responsio superbis et prudentibus, Sed mitibus et humilibus est dulcis et grata, quia hii de se desperant; ideo suscipit eos Dominus." WA 56.396, 9-13; LW 25.386.

¹³⁴ "Miserebor, cui misertus sum." WA 56.397, 6; LW 25.387.

¹³⁵ "Videtur istis verbis repellere [quasi a cogitatione et inquisitione predestinationis repellendo] Curiosos inquietosque de predestinatione sui Vel aliorum. Ut et vulgo: *Wem est wirt, dem wirt es, wen es trifft, den trifft*, q.d. Nemo sciet, cui miserebor et ignoscam, Nec meritis nec operibus nec ullis aliis poterit id certum esse ulli. [Et ita est verbum timoris et humiliationis.]" WA 56.397, 17-22; LW 25.387.

¹³⁶ "Quid adhuc queritur?" WA 56.400, 13; LW 25.390.

¹³⁷ "Est autem Sciendum, Quod Apostolus hoc verbum inducit in persona impie et superbe contra Deum contententium ac ex indignatione velut contra iniuriosum atque equalem murmurantium. Ideo in

Next, Luther backtracked to 9:17, “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh,”¹³⁸ and indicated a relation between God’s inducement of Pharaoh’s hard-heartedness and humility. For Luther, the main reason God chose Pharaoh to persecute the people of Israel was to bring about humility for Israel and destroy any presumption of righteousness they had regarding their works. In fact, God often uses the tribulations of the world (which God riles up), the flesh, and the devil to bring about humility.¹³⁹ Luther continued to discuss humility in the context of election under 9:21, “Has the potter no right over the clay?”¹⁴⁰ After quoting Chapter 99 of Augustine’s *Enchiridion*, where Augustine defended Paul’s rebuke of those who questioned God’s justice in election,¹⁴¹ Luther taught that God’s ability to shape or form people with either mercy or damnation should be pondered because it ultimately leads to humility. God’s election should not fill people with desperation or horror, but rather should destroy any sense of self-righteousness and add to the need for grace.¹⁴²

Greco habetur Non, ut nos habemus, ‘Qui respondeas’, Sed ‘qui contra’ seu ‘adversus respondes’, q.d. tunc cum tuo creatore etiam litigare atque opponere et respondere audes, nec in aliquo credere paratus?

Nam nequaquam est peccatum, si quis ex timore humilitate pie ad Deum dixerit: ‘Quid me fecisti sic?’ immo nec si ex abundantia tentationis violentia blasphemaret, Non ideo periret. Quia non est Deus noster Deus impatientie et crudelitatis, etiam super Impios.” WA 56.401, 1-10; LW 25.390.

¹³⁸ “Dicit enim Scriptura Pharaoni.” WA 56.401, 29; LW 25.391.

¹³⁹ “Quod solius Dei miserentis sit et non volentis, patet per hoc et probatur, Quia, ut Deus hoc sic esse ostenderet et sciret homo non suo cursu, Sed Dei misericordia se velle et currere, excitavit Pharaonem super filios Israel usque in desperationem extremam, Ut intelligerent se non suis viribus Pharaonem evadere, Sed virtute miserentis Dei, Quia eorum evadere non fuit eorum, Sed Domini educentis eos. Sic et modo, ut suos electos humiliet et doceat in nudam misericordiam suam confidere, deposita omni voluntatis Vel operum presumptione, permittit eos desperate affligi et persequi a diabolo Vel mundo Vel carne, quos excitat.” WA 56.402, 7-16; LW 25.391-392.

¹⁴⁰ “An non habet potestatem figulus Luti.” WA 56.404, 20; LW 25.394.

¹⁴¹ Augustine, “The Enchiridion” in vol.1 of *Basic Theological Writings of Saint Augustine*, ed. Whitney J. Oates, trans. J.F. Shaw (New York: Random House Publishers, 1948), 715-716.

¹⁴² “B. Augustinus Enchyridio c. 99.: ‘Universum genus humanum in apostatica radice tam Iusto Iudicio divino damnatum est, ut etiamsi nullus inde liberaretur, Nemo recte posset Dei vituperare Iustitiam.

After his discussion on election and humility, Luther returned to the theme of humility being necessary to accept God’s Word. Under 9:28, “For He will finish His Word and cut it short in righteousness,”¹⁴³ Luther taught that in order to believe God’s Word, people must humbly deny their intellect and wisdom. Additionally, the Word of God ultimately perfects and completes humility and a sense of submission. However, the Word is cut short in the proud. Luther also added that the Spiritual Word, in contrast to the Literal Word, consummates the humble but cuts off the arrogant, perfects the spiritual and cuts off the carnal. Thus, humility is described as both a precondition as well as a result of the Spiritual Word.¹⁴⁴

In Romans 10, Luther once again commented on relationship between humility and faith in the context of 10:6, “Who will ascend into heaven?”¹⁴⁵ Luther viewed this statement as another example of Paul contrasting the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of the Word. Whereas the righteousness of the Law requires works, the righteousness of the Word requires faith.¹⁴⁶ It is ultimately through faith in God’s Word,

Et qui liberantur, sic oportet liberari, ut ex pluribus non liberatis atque in damnatione Iustissima derelictis ostenderetur, quid meruisset universa conspersio Et quo etiam istos debitum Iudicium Dei duceret, Nisi eius indebita misericordia subvenirent, ut volentium de suis meritis gloriari <omne os obstruatur>, et <qui gloriatur, in Domino gloriatur>.’ Magna sunt ista verba et valde ponderanda, quia humiliant atque deterrent valde. Immo pulchre ostendit, Quare hec verba Apostolus dixerit, Scil. Ut nos erudiat ad humilitatem.” WA 56.404, 21-31; LW 25.394.

¹⁴³ “Verbum enim Consummans et abbrevians in Iustitia.” WA 56.406, 16; LW 25.396.

¹⁴⁴ “Quia Verbum Christi Non potest suscipi Nisi abnegatis et precis omnibus i.e. etiam intellectu capitvato et omni sensu humiliter submisso. Sed Quia plurimi persistunt in superbia sua Et verbum non capiunt, immo verbo non capiuntur, ideo vix reliquie saluantur, Et abbreviatur in illis, qui pereunt, Sed Consummatur in iis, qui credunt. Et hec est abbreviatio et Consummatio allegorica i.e. Literalis significatio spiritualis verbi. Sed tamen venit ex Morali. Quia Verbum spiritus abnegat omnem superbiam ac sensum proprium, ideo pariter necesse est abneget et prescindatur ab omnibus quoque superbis ac proprie sapientibus. Et sic Breviatio tropologica infert allegoricam. Quia vero Consummat et perficit humilitatem et sensum subiectionis, ideo consummat quoque et perficit omnes humiles et submissi sensus homines.” WA 56.408, 23-33, 409, 1-2; LW 25.397.

¹⁴⁵ “Quis ascendet in celum?” WA 56.414, 12; LW 25.405.

which the prophets commanded in the Old Testament, that people come to salvation. Faith, which accepts the Word, destroys all carnal knowledge and prepares people to be taught. Additionally, faith brings people to humility in their own feelings and senses and causes them to subject themselves to others.¹⁴⁷ Thus, as seen before, Luther viewed faith and humility as existing in a circular relationship, where each brings forth the other.

Luther's only other references to humility in Romans 10 fell under 10:20, "Isaiah is so bold as to say, 'I have been found by those who did not seek me, etc.'"¹⁴⁸ Luther, again, linked the general theme of Scripture to humility. All "these things that have been said, written, and done" have been for the purpose of humbling the prideful presumptions of people and recognizing the grace of God.¹⁴⁹ A few lines later, Luther again highlighted that works must depend heavily on humility in order to be accepted by God. Only works that are "reputed" righteous by God are considered good. People must recognize their inability to do "good" works on their own and be brought to humility in order for God to repute their works as good.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ "Primo Ut in glosa, Quod Apostolus duas Iustitias sic invicem comparat, ut Iustitie legis tribuat opus, Iustitie autem fidei verbum. Quia ad legem requirebatur opus, ad verbum autem requiritur fides [ad opus requirebatur lex, Ut sciretur, quid fieri deberet, Sed ad fidem requirebatur verbum, Ut non sciretur, Sed crederetur.]" WA 56.414, 21-25; LW 25.405-406.

¹⁴⁷ "Hoc autem Non prestat Nisi fides, Que execat omnem sapientiam carnis faciens Nihil sciri, paratum doceri ac duci et promptum audire et cedere. Quia Non Magnitudinem operum, Sed mortificationem veteris hominis requirit Deus. Non autem Mortificatur Nisi per fidem, que humiliat sensum proprium et subiicit alterius." WA 56.416, 5-9; LW 25.407.

¹⁴⁸ "Audet Isaias dicere: Inventus sum a non querentibus." WA 56.427, 22-23; LW 25.419.

¹⁴⁹ "Igitur hec omnia sunt dicta, Scripta, facta, ut humilietur superba presumptio hominum et commendetur gratia Dei, Ut 'qui gloriatur, non in suo cursu, Sed in Dei misericordia gloriatur'.

Nam Quid respondebit superbus, Qui multa fecerat in vita sua, si mulierculam Coniugii preferat Deus ei: Ecce hec mihi serviuit Non nisi pariendo filios; Et hoc eius opus omnibus tuis prepono et mihi placet? Quid Respondebit? Quia omnia opera tantum habent dignitatis, quantum habent apud Deum reputationis. Nunc autem potest vilissima reputare et paucissima, econtra plurima at maxima refutare. Ergo non faciamus bona? Absit. Sed in humilitate facienda sunt, tunc Deus non refutat ea." WA 56.427, 31, 428, 1-10; LW 25.420.

As in Romans 10, Luther only made a handful of references to humility in Romans 11, all under a small section of 11:4, “Bowed the knee to Baal.”¹⁵¹ After a short explanation of what Baal represented in the Old Testament, Luther wrote that the superstitious piety and righteousness that characterized Baal long ago was still alive and well in his day. Currently, Jews, heretics, and monks embellish God according to their own thoughts and foolish zeal and their “piety” becomes worse than the impious enemies of God. These “pious” individuals substitute peace with conflict, love with jealousy, and ultimately, humility with pride.¹⁵² Furthermore, these individuals, making an idol their god, think highly of their own righteousness, zeal and even humility. Thinking that they are humble, they flagellate themselves while denying their worthiness before God and occupy themselves with external works, all in hopes of gaining greater status before both God and people.¹⁵³

In Romans 12, Luther made his first mention of humility under 12:1, “I appeal to you, bretheren.”¹⁵⁴ According to Luther, Paul had to first destroy any thoughts of wisdom in people’s own thoughts before preparing an ethical system. To do this, Paul discredited

¹⁵⁰ “Ideo Mire stulti sunt hodie, Qui cumulant, ut sibi videtur, multa bona opera et grandia, Arbitrantes ideo esse bona, quia sunt laboriosa, multa et sibi visa bona. Sed frustra. Humilitatis opera sola bona sunt, Quam illi penitus ignorant.” WA 56.428, 10-13; LW 25.420.

¹⁵¹ “Ante Baal.” WA 56.429, 19; LW 25.422.

¹⁵² “Fuit autem per Baal figuratum monstrum Iustitie et pietatis superstitiose, que usque hodie Late dominatur. Qua Iudei, heretici, Monii i.e. Singulares [superbi] Deum verum colunt secundum sensum suum proprium, stultissimo zelo, nimia pietate omnibus Impiis peiores, scil. propter Deum Dei inimici ac propter timorem Dei contemptores Dei, propter pietatem Impii, propter pacem inquieti, propter charitatem ac sanctitatem Invidi ac prophani ac propter humilitatem superbi.” WA 56.430, 6-12; LW 25.422.

¹⁵³ “Unde et colitur istud Idolum cordis, tanquam veri Dei sit signum et ipsa Veritas ac Iustitia. Quibus? Osculis scil. manuum i.e. complacentia operum suorum et magniputatione Iustitie sue; deinde transilit ac exultat et iactat suum studium, sua Inventa; tandem Incidit se cultris ac Lanceolis, i.e. seipsum verbis humilitatis ac penitentie arguit et dicit: O ego miserimus peccator! Non sum dignus videre celum. Miserere mei, Deus, etc. Grandibus se occupat foris laboribus et Iustitiis, Quas eo ferventius agit, quo eas maioris reputari sperat apud Deum at homines.” WA 56.430, 22-30; LW 25.423.

¹⁵⁴ “Obsecro Vos, fratres.” WA 56.440, 19; LW 25.433.

the idea of righteousness through works which hinders spiritual birth. Luther, then, presented a list of virtues that Paul continuously stressed as crucial to good works, including unity, peace, loyalty, and humility.¹⁵⁵ In order to highlight the importance of humility in the list, Luther subsequently quoted Philippians 2, in which Paul beseeched the Christians at Philippi to, “in humility consider others superior to you.”¹⁵⁶

In 12:2, “That you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect,”¹⁵⁷ Luther returned to the topic of God’s will and wisdom being contrary to people’s own desires and wisdom. When people are led by God into his will, it often happens against their desires and they become displeased and desperate. However, in continuing on in God’s will, they submit themselves to God and are humbled in faith and patience.¹⁵⁸

Under the same verse, Luther also expressed his disdain for “justice” in the sense that lawyers and intellectuals use it. He reiterated that God cares nothing of outward righteousness (the *LW* translates “*iustitia*” in the first sense as “justice” but now as

¹⁵⁵ “Apostolus Instituturus Christianam ethicam Nihil ita primum curat eradicare usque in finem Epistole quam prudentiam seu sensum proprium. Ideo statim ab ea peste omnium nocentissima incipit, Quod ea sola Nativitatem spiritualem subtili specie bonorum rursus dissipat ac ex ipsis bonis operibus magis occidit. Hoc autem Non solum in hac Epistola, Sed et in omnibus facit diligentissime, Sciens, quod extra unitatem, pacem, charitatem, humilitatem, Quarum illa prudentia presens mors est, Nihil sunt omnia opera.” *WA* 56.440, 20-25, 441, 1-2; *LW* 25.433.

¹⁵⁶ “Unde et Phil. 2.: ‘Si qua viscera miserationis, implete gaudium meum, ut idem sapiatis, eandem charitatem habentes, unanimes, idipsum sentientes, Nihil per Contentionem neque inanem gloriam, Sed in humilitate superiores Invicem arbitantes, non que sua sunt, singuli consyderantes, Sed que aliorum. Hoc enim sentite in vobis’, etc.” *WA* 56.441, 2-7; *LW* 25.433.

¹⁵⁷ “Ut probetis, que Sit...Bona...Beneplacens....perfecta.” *WA* 56.445, 13-15; *LW* 25.437.

¹⁵⁸ “Idcirco ii, ‘qui spiritu Dei aguntur’, homines sunt sensus et opinionis flexibilis, quos ‘ducit mirabiliter dextra’ Dei, quo non volunt neque cogitant, Sed super omnem sensum. Ideo cum ducuntur, apparet Voluntas Dei contra eos aspera, displicens atque penitus desperata. In quo tamen ductu se prebent humiliter resignatos Et in fide patiuntur, Cumque durissime fuerint examinati, tunc primum intelligunt, quam bona fuerit voluntas, Sed incognita, immo incognoscibilis, quando implebatur.” *WA* 56.445, 21-27, 446, 1; *LW* 25.437-438.

“righteousness.”¹⁵⁹). True righteousness consists of humility, in which people subject themselves to all.¹⁶⁰ This general statement further demonstrates the prominent role that humility played at this time in Luther’s career.

After Luther’s explicit link between humility and righteousness, he mentioned humility in yet another sense. Still speaking about Romans 12:2, Luther differentiated between humility in regards to the common individual and God and between God-ordained rulers and their subjects. Unlike individuals in their submission to God and others, rulers do not need to be “characterized” as having humility, patience, and subjection. Rather, in executing their civic duties, rulers should be characterized by judgment, glory, and vengeance.¹⁶¹ Under 12:9, “Let Love be without dissimulation,”¹⁶² Luther spoke of humility in a negative sense in referring to those who are slow to correct evils in others. These people, in a semblance of humility but actually in ignorance, interpret and praise evil behavior as good as long as the behavior has a superficial veneer of good.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ *LW* 25.441.

¹⁶⁰ “Inde (Ut de me loquar) Vocabulum istud ‘Iustitia’ tanta est mihi nausea audire, Ut non tam dolerem, si quis rapinam mihi faceret. Et tamen sonat Iuristis semper in ore. Non est gens in mundo in hac re indoctor quam iuriste et boneintentionarii seu sublimate rationis. Quia et ego in me et multis expertus sum, Ubi Iusti eramus, Quod Deus irrisit nos in nostra Iustitia. Et tamen audere audiui homines: Scio, quod Iustitiam habeo, Sed non advertit. verum est, Sed particularem; Sed hanc Deus, sicut vere est, Nihil curat. Universalis ergo Iustitia Est humilitas; hec subiicit omnes omnibus ac per hoc reddit omnibus omnia, Ut Christus ait ad Iohannem: ‘Sic oportet nos implere omnem Iustitiam.’” *WA* 56.449, 1-11; *LW* 25.441.

¹⁶¹ “Veruntamen hec omnia dicta sunt de iis, In quorum potestate est hec facere et sui Iuris sunt. Secus in iis, qui aliis prelati sunt, quia ii non agunt, que sua sunt, Sed officium Dei agunt. Ideo tenentur suos subditos regere in Iustitia et non permittere alterum alteri Iniuriam facere. Hic enim non habent potestatem sustinendi Nec patientia hic locum habet. Deo enim non convenit humilitas et patientia aut subiectio, sed Iudicium, gloria et vindicta.” *WA* 56.451, 3-9; *LW* 25.443-444.

¹⁶² “Dilectio sine Simulatione.” *WA* 56.459, 9; *LW* 25.451.

¹⁶³ “Quidam Ignorantes, Qui Vitia pro virtutibus admirantur ac laudant Magna humilitatis perfectione, promptiores bona interpretari, que mala videntur, Cito laudare, tarde vituperare, etiamsi sint

Luther returned to his exhortations towards humility in 12:10, “Outdo one another in showing honor.”¹⁶⁴ After again quoting Philippians 2, Luther taught that what Paul was referring to is internal honor. People with internal honor judge others with honor before themselves or in other words, are humble. Conversely, the proud do give honor to others, but only after others first attribute honor to them.¹⁶⁵ The final reference that Luther made to humility in Romans 12 came under 12:16, “Do not mind high things.”¹⁶⁶ Here, Luther used humility to mean that people should not scorn low, or humble things and adore high and sublime things. Thus, this segment of 12:16 also falls under the umbrella of humility.¹⁶⁷

nonnunquam maxima vitia, licet tenui specie boni obiecta adeo, ut si videre nequies per noctem, palpare tamen possis.” WA 56.460, 11-15; LW 25.452.

¹⁶⁴ “Honore Invicem prevenientes.” WA 56.462, 12; LW 25.455.

¹⁶⁵ “Sic Phil. 2.: ‘In humilitate superiores Invicem arbitantes.’ Et Dominus Luce 14.: ‘Cum vocatus fueris, Vade, recumbe in nouissimo loco.’ Loquitur autem hic de honore interiori, Qui est opinio sublimis et estimatio proximi. Nam Exterior sepius est Simulatus et mercennarius, dum exhibetur, ut maior ei reddatur. Unde si non reddatur, indignatur, cessans et ipse honorare. Hoc est, quod dicit ‘Arbitantes superiores’. Non ait: locantes vos Invicem superiores. Hunc autem honorem Non potest exhibere alteri, Nisi abneget sibi et confusione se dignum, quoslibet autem alios honore dignos pre seipso Iudicet; hoc est, Nisi humilis sit, non prevenit honore alium.

Superbia etiam honorat, Sed subsequitur honore alios, Sicut humilitas prevenit. Illa expectat preveniri, hec autem nec subsequi alios cupit, Sed se solum prevenire debere credit.” WA 56.462, 13-25; LW 25.455.

¹⁶⁶ “Non Alta Sapientes.” WA 56.471, 9; LW 25.463.

¹⁶⁷ “‘Alta’ et ‘humilia’ in neutro genere ponit pro masculino, Ut et 1. Corinth. 1.: ‘Infirma mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat fortia.’ Et iterum: ‘Stultum Dei sapientius est hominibus.’ Vult ergo dicere: Nolite sapere i.e. non vobis placeant sublimes in hoc mundo et displiceant abiecti, Sed potius afficiamini humilibus et in illis vobis placete, Ut b. Augustinus in Regula: ‘Non de parentum divitum dignitate, Sed de pauperum fratrum sotietate gloriari.’

Id notandum

Quod ‘humile’ nostra translatio promiscue accipit, Cum in Greco aliud sit ‘Tapinosis’, ‘Tapinos’ i.e. ‘humilitas’, ‘humilis’ seu ‘vilis’, ‘vilitas’ propria significatione Latina, Qua ‘humilis’ dicitur contrarium sublimi Seu nobili. Aliud porro Est ‘Tapinophrosyne’, quod a ‘Tapinos’ et ‘Phronin’ i.e. ‘sapere humilia’ venit, humilitas scil. sensus ad inferiora sese accomodans et vilia non despiciens, i.e. Qui habet affectum ad ignobilia ac contemptibilia, fugiens sublimia. talis affectus est humilitas, que virtus vocatur. Unde ibi: ‘Quia respexit humilitatem ancille sue’, Grecus ‘Tapinosin’. At Phil. 2.: ‘In humilitate superiores Invicem arbitantes’, Grecus ‘Tapinophrosyne’. Eph. 4.: In humilitate et mansuetudine’, Grecus ‘Tapinophrosynes.’” WA 56.471, 10-26, 472, 1-2; LW 25.463-464.

In Romans 13, Luther made only one mention of humility in his explanation of verse 13:10, “Love is the fulfilling of the Law.”¹⁶⁸ Luther perceived this verse as another example that speaks to the importance of the inward condition of people versus the outward appearance of works. Luther viewed Jews, who wore phylactery boxes on their heads, as the antithesis of the love that Paul spoke of in 13:10. Luther presented the love that Paul referred to as a progression: first, people come to knowledge of their sins and defects, second, they are humbled, and third, the fear of God is established.¹⁶⁹ Thus, humility is a critical component in the love that Paul believed fulfilled the Law.

Luther made his final references to humility in Romans 14, primarily under 14:1. With Paul’s exhortation toward unity, “But not for disputes over opinions,”¹⁷⁰ Luther returned to his theme of righteousness coming from recognition of sins and humble groans for the grace of God. After demonstrating the futility of doing any deeds out of a sense of obligation or compulsion, Luther gave several examples from Scripture where the authors incorporated the fear of God into their teachings on salvation and service to God. Luther next gave a progression regarding the fear of God. Initially, people perpetually suspect themselves of still committing evil deeds. Next, because people believe that they are always in sin and are not confident in their own abilities, they are

¹⁶⁸ “Plenitudo Legis Est Dilectio.” WA 56.482, 19; LW 25.475.

¹⁶⁹ “Non vult Moses, Ut Phariscaica philacteria faciamus, Sed ‘Signum in manu fieri illa’ Est omnia opera ad illud applicari et dirigi. ‘Ante oculos’ Est omnes cogitationes secundum ea dirigi, ‘Scribi et ostiis et limine’ est omnes sensus et precipue linguam secundum ea dirigi et Applicari.

Qui hec faceret,

Veniret perfecte ad suorum defectuum cognitionem et humiliationem atque timorem Dei, Qui alias manet securus et sanctus sibi.” WA 56.484, 17-24; LW 25.477.

¹⁷⁰ “Non in disceptationibus cogitationum.” WA 56.498, 28; LW 25.492.

humbled and continually ask for God's grace (as did the saints). Finally, people who are humbled in this way make themselves an atonement by God.¹⁷¹

Luther's final mention of humility fell under Romans 14:14, "Nothing is unclean in itself. But it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean."¹⁷² Luther thought Paul was speaking about two linked ideas in this section; Christians who are strong in faith should not to scorn those who are weaker nor scandalize them. Thus, since God accepts the weak and condemns those who condemn, people should display mutual humility and acceptance regardless of their levels of faith.¹⁷³

Summary

From an analysis of Luther's use of the word *humilitas* and its derivatives in his Lectures on Romans, we find that it was a frequent and profound topic. Although in his lectures, Luther discussed a number of theological topics varying from election to faith, a common "thread" between the various topics discussed was humility. We see this through Luther's discussions of humility in relation to over a dozen different topics in 13 of 15 chapters of Romans. A brief summary of the topics discussed in relation to humility will bring together and further demonstrate Luther's focus on humility throughout his Lectures on Romans.

¹⁷¹ "Quare enim et Apostolus Petrus precipit: 'Deus timete?' Et Paulus 'Hominibus timorem Dei suademus.' Et iterum: 'cum timore et tremore vestram ipsorum salutem operamini.' Et psalmus: 'Servite Domino in timore et exultate ei cum tremore.' Quomodo potest timere Deum Vel opera sua, Nisi ea mala et suspecta habeat? Timor enim a malo est. Ideo Sancti solliciti sunt pro gratia Dei semper Invocanda. Non confidunt in bonam intentionem aut universam diligentiam suam, Sed semper adhuc sese malum agere timent. Quo timore humiliati gratiam querunt et gemunt, Qua humilitate et Deum sibi propitium faciunt." WA 56.503, 13-21; LW 25.497-498.

¹⁷² "Nihil commune per ipsum...Nisi ei, qui existimat, illi commune est." WA 56.506, 29, 507, 2; LW 25.500.

¹⁷³ "Primo: **Deus**, inquit, **illum assumpsit** [14,3]. Quo Verbo gravissimo eos premit, Ut iam non hominem, Sed Deum contemnat aut Iudicet, qui contemnit aut Iudicat. Ideo Vehementi impulsu cogit eos ad mutuam humilitatem et susceptionem." WA 56.507, 21-24; LW 25.501.

Luther mentioned humility in the context of wisdom and knowledge in Romans 1, 3, 7, and 12. He consistently emphasized that true wisdom is humility created through the true knowledge of people's sinful nature and their need of God's grace.¹⁷⁴ Luther discussed humility in relation to God's Word no fewer than nine times throughout Romans 1-3, 9, and 10. In these instances, Luther often taught that humility was necessary to accept God's Word since it often went counter to people's own wisdom.¹⁷⁵

Suffering was another topic that Luther viewed as related to humility in Romans 2, 4, 5, and 9. For Luther, suffering was an inescapable and invaluable occurrence in the lives of both believers and unbelievers because it brings unbelievers to the humble acceptance of their helplessness and maintains humility in believers.¹⁷⁶ Luther also stressed humility in the context of Christian conduct for rulers and non-rulers in Romans 2, 12, and 13-14.¹⁷⁷

One of the doctrines in which Luther emphasized humility the most was in the economy of salvation in Romans 2-4. This theme will be further discussed in a later chapter, but at this point, it can be said that Luther viewed humility as necessary before salvation, during salvation, and after salvation.¹⁷⁸

Luther also frequently discussed humility in relation to faith or belief, especially in Romans 3. Interestingly, Luther seemed to fluctuate back and forth in regards to

¹⁷⁴ See notes 41, 77, 90, 114, 157, and 158.

¹⁷⁵ See notes 48, 59, 64, 68, 77, 83, 86, 143, and 146.

¹⁷⁶ See notes 54, 97, 105, and 138.

¹⁷⁷ See notes 56, 161, 169, and 173.

¹⁷⁸ See notes 62, 64, 66, 68, 72-73, 81, 83-84, and 102-103.

whether humility comes before faith or faith before humility.¹⁷⁹ This circular relationship will also be discussed in a subsequent chapter. Related to faith, Luther also emphasized humility's relationship to certainty in Romans 3-4, 9, and 14. As with faith, this link between humility and certainty (or uncertainty) will be laid out in detail below. However, from the analysis on Luther's explicit use of *humilitas* in this chapter, it seems that any conclusion of Luther's stance on certainty at this time in his career, particularly of faith and salvation, should be done in the context of his focus on humility.¹⁸⁰

Another relationship that Luther discussed was that between humility and teaching/preaching, especially in Romans 3-4. For Luther, the main purpose of preaching and teaching was to bring people to humility through the knowledge and acknowledgement of their depraved nature and the necessity of God's grace.¹⁸¹ Luther spoke about humility and works in Romans 3, 7-10, and 14, often emphasizing that humility prevents people from relying on works for righteousness.¹⁸² Additionally, humility was discussed in the relation to the Holy Spirit in Romans 1,¹⁸³ sin in Chapters 4-5, and 7,¹⁸⁴ and election in Chapters 8-9.¹⁸⁵

Thus, as we have seen, humility was either at the center, or strongly linked to several of Luther's theological arguments in his Lectures on Romans. There was scarcely a chapter of Romans where Luther did not perceive humility as inherent in the Apostle's

¹⁷⁹ See notes 64, 68, 70, 75, 83-84, and 86.

¹⁸⁰ See notes 86, 102-103, 135, 171.

¹⁸¹ See notes 79 and 98-99.

¹⁸² See notes 81, 83-84, 95, 110, 118, 120, 122, 130, 135, 139, 147, 150, and 171.

¹⁸³ See note 130.

¹⁸⁴ See notes 97-98, 102-103, 107, and 116.

¹⁸⁵ See notes 128, 130, 133, 135, and 142.

teachings. It is not surprising, given Paul's focus on sin, the works of the Law, and righteousness through faith in Romans 3, that Luther mentioned humility more than thirty times throughout his exposition of Romans 3, more than any other chapter. Notably, the doctrines that Luther most frequently linked to humility were salvation, certainty, faith, and works, all topics that Luther is known for focusing on throughout his theological career. It is the relation between humility and these topics on which the next chapter will expand.

Chapter 3

Martin Luther's Main Themes of Humility in Romans

Having analyzed the various instances where Luther used the word “humility” in his Lectures on Romans, the present work will now “unpack” the core sub-themes of Luther’s theology of humility in Romans.

Luther’s theology of humility can be split into two sub-headings: humility concerning knowledge and humility concerning works. Certainly, various other sub-headings and sub-themes could be deduced. However in his comments on humility, Luther alternated back and forth between the importance of humility in what people can know and about the righteousness and efficacy of works.

Humility in Knowledge

Within Luther’s comments on the importance of humility regarding people’s cognitive capacities, there were two main areas of focus: the importance of knowing our true state before God without his grace and warnings against confidence in one’s own knowledge and intellect.

One of Luther’s main points was that people must have an accurate understanding of their sinfulness before conversion in order to do good works after their conversion. However, people are incapable of coming to this understanding through their rational capabilities. Luther denied that humility is a moral virtue which can be achieved outside of God’s grace.¹⁸⁶ Luther repeatedly stressed that it is not natural for people to consider

¹⁸⁶ “Item Sicut dictum est, Quod Deus siue sermones eius Iustificatur, quando in nobis per fidem Iusti et veri creduntur, quales sunt in seipsis etiam sine nostra credulitate, Ita Similiter intelligendum est Nos oportere peccatores fieri ac mendaces, Stultos ac omnem Iustitiam, veritatem, sapientiam, virtutem nostram perire. Hoc autem fit, quando nos credimus esse peccatores, mendaces etc. et nostram virtutem atque Iustitiam coram Deo penitus nihil esse. Ac sic tales efficitur in nobis intra nos, quales sumus extra nos (i. e. coram Deo), etiamsi intra nos non simus tales i. e. etiamsi non credamus nos esse tales. Quia Sicut solus Deus verax et Iustus et potens in seipso, vult etiam extra se i. e. in nobis esse talis, vt sic glorificetur

themselves sinners and deserving of God's wrath. On the contrary, people's intellects often teach, contrary to God's Word, that they are doing works and deeds out of true love of knowledge and virtue. People can only consider themselves sinners through faith in God's Word.¹⁸⁷ It is this point that led Luther into extreme suspicion of anything that comes from "the prudence of the flesh."¹⁸⁸ Thus, before people can see themselves as sinners reliant on God's grace, their initial self-understanding must first be broken down and destroyed by God.

Contrary to the "prudence of the flesh," Luther taught that those who are truly justified still consider themselves sinners before God. The belief that people who think they are righteous are actually still sinners and the those who considers themselves sinners are righteous is one of Luther's most conspicuous doctrines in Romans and a clear manifestation of his well-known dictum *simul iustus et peccator* (one is justified and a sinner at the same time). Luther meant that people are justified outside of themselves (*extra nos*) rather than through internal infusions or efforts (*in nobis*). God

(Est enim gloria alicuius boni, quod intus in aliquo est, ad extra et alios diffusio), Ita vult, Quod sicut solus omnis homo est mendax, in Iustus, Infirmus extra se (i. e. coram Deo), vt etiam talis fiat et intra se, i. e. Vt confiteatur et agnoscat se talem, qualis est." WA 56.229, 7-20; LW 25.212-213.

¹⁸⁷ "Nunc autem Deus reuelauit, quid de nobis sentiret ac Iudicaret, scil. quod omnes sint in peccato. Huic ergo reuelationi sue siue sermonibus suis debemus cedere et credere ac sic Iustificare et verificare eos ac per hoc nos ipsos (quod non cognoueramus) secundum eos peccatores confiteri. Sic Apostolus: 'Si quis inter vos vult esse sapiens, stultus fiat, vt sit sapiens.' Quod autem de stultitia dicit, de omnibus aliis imperfectionibus intelligi oportet, Vt Qui vult esse Iustus, Verax, potens, fiat peccator, mendax et infirmus." WA 56.229, 28-33, 230, 1-2; LW 25.214-215.

¹⁸⁸ "'Prudentia Carnis' Est electio boni proprii et vitatio mali proprii et reprobatio boni communis et electio mali communis. Hęc est prudentia, que dirigit Carnem i. e. concupiscentiam et voluntatem propriam, Que seipso fruitur et aliis omnibus vtitur, etiam ipso Deo; se in omnibus querit et sua. Hęc facit hominem esse sibiipso obiectum finale et vltimum et Idolum, propter quem ipse omnia agit, patitur, conatur, cogitat, dicit. Et ea sola reputat bona, que sibi bona sunt, et ea sola mala, que sibi mala. Hęc Curuitas et prauitas et iniquitas in Scripturis multipliciter arguitur sub nomine fornicationis et Idolatrię, et est, vt supra capitulo precedente 6. dictum est, profundissima in natura, immo est ipsa vulnerata et per totum fermentata natura, adeo vt non solum sine gratia sit irremediabilis, sed etiam incognoscibilis ad plenum." WA 56.361, 11-22; LW 25.350.

imputes our righteousness to us *extra nos* and, since God's councils are far above our cognitive functions, people can never fully know where they stand before God.¹⁸⁹

Thus, implicit to the teaching of *simul iustus et peccator* is that certainty of righteousness actually indicates a lack of justification whereas uncertainty regarding one's status before God, is actually a sign that one is indeed justified. Only those already justified believe that they are wretched and still sinners.¹⁹⁰ This doctrine was not a set of mental gymnastics where people superficially tell themselves that they are sinners but internally are confident of their justification. Luther actually believed in a paradoxical relationship between being justified and having certain knowledge of one's justification.

¹⁸⁹ "Beati, quorum remisse etc. Sit:

Sancti Intrinsece sunt peccatores semper, ideo extrinsece Iustificantur semper
Hipocriteꝝ autem intrinsece sunt Iusti semper, ideo extrinsece sunt peccatores semper.
eius sumus. Igitur extrinsece sumus Iusti, quando non ex nobis nec ex operibus, Sed ex sola Dei reputatione Iusti sumus. Reputatio enim eius non in nobis nec in potestate nostra est. ergo nec Iustitia nostra in nobis est nec in potestate nostra. Sicut Osee 13.: 'Perditio tua, Israel, tantum in me auxilium tuum' i. e. intra te non est nisi perditio, Sed salus tua extra te est. Et psalmo 120.: 'Auxilium meum a Domino' q. d. non ex me. Intrinsece autem sumus peccatores per naturam relatiuorum. Quia si solum Deo reputante sumus Iusti, ergo non nobis uiuentibus vel operantibus. Quare intrinsece et ex nobis Impii semper. Sic psalmo 50.: 'Peccatum meum contra me est semper', i. e. in conspectu meo semper habeo, quod sum peccator. 'Tibi enim peccaui' (i. e. sum peccator), 'propterea Iustificabis in verbo tuo' etc. Econtra hipocrite, quia intrinsece sunt Iusti, per vim et necessitatem relationis sunt extrinsece iniusti (i. e. reputatione Dei), Vt psalmo 94.: 'Et dixi: Semper hii errant corde', Qui omnia peruertunt verba Scripture, Vt illud: 'Peccatum meum contra me est semper.' Ipsi Vero: Iustitia mea contra me est semper (i. e. in conspectu meo), Et beati, qui Iustitiam operantur etc. Tibi, inquiunt, (non peccaui, sed) Iusta operor: immo Sibi operantur." WA 56.268, 26-32, 269, 1-19; LW 25.256-257, 336-337.

¹⁹⁰ "Quia dum sancti peccatum suum semper in conspectu habent et Iustitiam a Deo secundum misericordiam ipsius implorant, eoipso semper quoque Iusti a Deo reputantur. Ergo sibiipsis et in veritate Iniusti sunt, Deo autem propter hanc confessionem peccati eos reputanti Iusti; Re vera peccatores, Sed reputatione miserentis Dei Iusti; Ignoranter Iusti et Scientes iniusti; peccatores in re, Iusti autem in spe. Et hoc est, quod dicit hic: 'Beati, quorum remisse iniquitates et tecta peccata.' Vnde sequitur: 'Dixi: confitebor aduersum me Iniustitiam meam' (i. e. in conspectu meo semper habeo peccatum meum, quod tibi confitear). Ideo 'et tu remisisti impietatem peccati', Non solum mihi, Sed omnibus. Vnde sequitur: 'Pro hac orabit ad te omnis sanctus.' Ecce omnis sanctus est peccator et orat pro peccatis suis. Sic Iustus in principio est accusator sui... Ita per spem misericordieꝝ 'vita ipsorum abscondita est cum Christo in Deo'. Et per timorem Iudicii mors eorum et peccatum manifestum est cum ipsis, apud se ipsos et in conscientia sua. Semper se Iudicant in timore, quia sciunt sese ex seipsis non posse Iustos esse coram Deo. Et ita Iudicium Dei timent in operibus omnibus, sicut Iob ait: 'Verebar omnia opera mea Sciens, quia non parcis delinquenti.' Et tamen ne desperent, misericordiam in Christo inuocant Et ita exaudiuntur. Hęc est sapientia abscondita in mysterio et veritas. Quia sicut Deus et Consilium ipsius nobis ignota sunt, Ita et Iustitia nostra, que in ipso et consilio eius tota pendet." WA 56.269, 25-30, 270, 1-7, 290, 22-31; LW 25.256-261, 278.

Thus, Luther's doctrine of humility, at least at this point in his theology, emphasized people's inability to know exactly when or if they are justified.

The second theme under Luther's teachings on humility in people's knowledge, related to the importance of an accurate self-perception, was the constant warning against trusting in one's own rational capabilities for guidance. To illustrate the point, Luther described two different types of "fools:" fools on the "left" symbolizing worldly concerns, and the others on the "right," symbolizing concern with their own opinions. Luther viewed the fools "on the right" as greater fools since they already believe themselves righteous.¹⁹¹

Luther also used the expression, adopted from 1 Corinthians 1:25, "The foolishness of God is wiser than man," to demonstrate that God's "councils" must always be hidden and never understood and, thus, contrary to people's perceptions.¹⁹² People's wisdom cannot grasp the hidden secrets of God's wisdom and often does not even

¹⁹¹ "Sicut illud 'Non est Iustus quisquam' de istis duobus hominum generibus intelligitur, scil. qui ad sinistram et qui ad dexteram declinauerunt, Ita et illud 'Non est intelligens' Et 'non est requirens'. illi enim quia non sunt Iusti, non Intelligunt, non requirunt deficiendo et omittendo, isti vero excedendo et nimis committendo. Sunt enim nimis Iusti, nimis intelligentes, nimis querentes, adeo vt sint incorrigibiles in suo sensu. Quomodo et Comicus ait: 'faciunt ne intelligendo, vt nihil intelligant.' Et idem iterum: 'Summa Iustitia sepe summa stultitia', immo Iniustitia est, Scil. dum pertinaciter statuitur et non ceditur in partem contrariam. Vnde et prouerbium Vulgo habetur: Weiß Leut narn groblich. Sapientiores crassius delirant." WA 56.238, 4-14; LW 25.223-226.

¹⁹² "Ita similiter necesse est, vt qui potens, sapiens, suauis est, ita hec habeat, quasi non habeat. Et idcirco periculosissima vita est principum mundi et Iuristarum, atque qui se potentia et sapientia habent conseruare. Nam si hec non sint apparentia minimeque abscondita, penitus ipsi nihil sunt. Si autem sunt, Ecce 'mors in olla', maxime si placet affectu ea sic hominibus patere et estimari. Difficile est enim a proprio affectu abscondere et ipsum contemnere, quod omnibus manifestatur et reputatur. Quia Sapientia Dei in abscondito est, incognita mundo. 'Verbum enim caro factum est' et Sapientia incarnata ac per hoc abscondita nec nisi intellectu attingibilis, Sicut Christus non nisi reuelatione cognoscibilis. Quare qui de visibilibus et in visibilibus sapientes sunt (quales sunt omnes homines extra fidem et qui Deum ignorant ac futuram vitam), non intelligunt, non sapiunt, i. e. non sunt intelligentes, non sapientes, Sed insipientes et ceci, Et licet videantur sibi sapientes, tamen stulti facti sunt. Quia non sapientia, que in occultis est, Sed que humanitus reperiri potuit, sapientes sunt. ... Quandocunque enim Deus Nouum gradum gratie dat, ita dat, [vt] contra omnem sensum et consilium nostrum veniat. Qui ergo tunc non cedit ac mutat sensum suum et sustinet, repellit et fit impatiens, nunquam acquirit eam gratiam. Ideo transformatio sensus nostri Est vtilissima scientia fidelium Christi. Et conseruatio sensus proprii Est nocentissima resistentia spiritus sancti." WA 56.171, 18-25, 237, 20-28, 446, 11-16; LW 25.151, 223, 366, 438-439.

acknowledge that God's Word is indeed God's Word, the only epistemological tool for knowing (but not necessarily understanding) God's commands and desires for humankind.¹⁹³ Luther applied II Corinthians 10:5 to this view of people's epistemological limitations, teaching that the Christian must take not only every thought, but also their entire intellect, "captive" in order to accept God's Word.¹⁹⁴

Luther discussed another aspect of people's cognitive limitations in his exposition of Romans 3, specifically verse 17: "The way of peace they do not know." For Luther, this meant that everyone must be humbled through the fear of God (*timor Dei*) since they must "accept all things" passed down by God.¹⁹⁵ Luther detailed that having a lack of

¹⁹³ "Item Sicut dictum est, Quod Deus siue sermones eius Iustificatur, quando in nobis per fidem Iusti et veri creduntur, quales sunt in seipsis etiam sine nostra credulitate, Ita Similiter intelligendum est Nos oportere peccatores fieri ac mendaces, Stultos ac omnem Iustitiam, veritatem, sapientiam, virtutem nostram perire. Hoc autem fit, quando nos credimus esse peccatores, mendaces etc. et nostram virtutem atque Iustitiam coram Deo penitus nihil esse. Ac sic tales efficimur in nobis intra nos, quales sumus extra nos (i. e. coram Deo), etiamsi intra nos non simus tales i. e. etiamsi non credamus nos esse tales. Quia Sicut solus Deus verax et Iustus et potens in seipso, vult etiam extra se i. e. in nobis esse talis, vt sic glorificetur (Est enim gloria alicuius boni, quod intus in aliquo est, ad extra et alios diffusio), Ita vult, Quod sicut solus omnis homo est mendax, in Iustus, Infirmus extra se (i. e. coram Deo), vt etiam talis fiat et intra se, i. e. Vt confiteatur et agnoscat se talem, qualis est. Et ita Deus per suum exire nos facit ad nos ipsos introire Et per sui cognitionem infert nobis et nostri cognitionem. Quia Nisi Deus ita prius exiret et verax fieri quereret in nobis, Nos non possemus introire ad nos et mendaces ac Iniusti fieri. Non enim potuit homo ex seipso scire, Quod talis esset coram Deo, nisi ipse Deus hoc ipsum reuelaret. 'Quis enim cognouit sensum Domini? Aut quis consiliarius eius fuit?' Alioquin homo semper se reputasset veracem, Iustum, sapientem, maxime quia coram se et hominibus talis esset. Nunc autem Deus reuelauit, quid de nobis sentiret ac Iudicaret, scil. quod omnes sint in peccato. Huic ergo reuelationi sue siue ser[monibus suis debemus cedere et credere ac sic Iustificare et verificare eos ac per hoc nos ipsos (quod non cognoueramus) secundum eos peccatores confiteri. Sic Apostolus: 'Si quis inter vos vult esse sapiens, stultus fiat, vt sit sapiens.' Quod autem de stultitia dicit, de omnibus aliis imperfectionibus intelligi oportet, Vt Qui vult esse Iustus, Verax, potens, fiat peccator, mendax et infirmus. Ista itio spiritualis est, Non physica seu naturalis, Scil. totum propter sensum proprium, vt destruat, qui de nobis male Iudicat nobisipsis. Ideo 'dispersit superbos mente'. Hec est tota potentia, quam fecit. Vnde sequitur, Quod ista locutio est omnino spiritualis, que docet nos fieri peccatores, quam cum Apostolus predicaret, multi literaliter et carnaliter accipiebant. Quomodo fit peccator, qui prius Iustus erat, Vt hic sequenter dicit." WA 56.229, 7-33, 230, 1-8; LW 25.213-215.

¹⁹⁴ "Quia Verbum Christi Non potest suscipi Nisi abnegatis et precis omnibus i. e. etiam intellectu captiuato et omni sensu humiliter submisso. Sed Quia plurimi persistunt in superbia sua Et verbum non capiunt, immo verbo non capiuntur, ideo vix reliquie saluantur, Et abbreviatur in illis, qui pereunt, Sed Consummatur in iis, qui credunt." WA 56.408, 23-28; LW 25.397-398.

¹⁹⁵ "Timor enim Dei humiliat omnia, humilitas autem capacem facit omnium. Ideo illi nihil capiunt, quia sunt superbi, ideo autem superbiunt, quia non timent Deum. Ideo autem non timent Deum, quia presumunt, quod eorum sensum et opera approbabit, quia ipsis Iustus et rectus apparet, Non

faith in one area of God's Word is equally as sinful as unbelief in all areas. When people examine themselves and find no unbelief in any area it does not mean that no unbelief exists. Luther believed that a "hidden unbelief" can exist that people are completely unaware of but still makes them guilty of unbelief in God's Word.¹⁹⁶

Thus, in relation to the previously mentioned doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator*, people must always assume that there exists in them a secret unbelief. This uncertainty regarding the wholeness of one's faith in turn produces the *timor Dei* and humility in people.¹⁹⁷ Finally, humility and the *timor Dei* causes people to live in constant fear of

attendentes, Quod si Deus Iudicet, nihil Iustum, nihil mundum Inueniet. Iudicium enim Dei Infinite est subtilitatis. Et nihil ita subtiliter factum, quod coram eo non grossum Inueniatur, Nihil tam Iustum, quod non Iniustum, Nihil tam verax, quod non mendacium, Nihil tam purum et sanctum, quod non pollutum et prophanum coram eo sit. Aut si hoc attendunt, certe 'personarum acceptionem apud Deum' affectant, Vt eorum Iusta et vera non Iudicet et damnet sc. fauore singulari permittendo eos Impuros puros haberi. Ideoque si timerent, Scirent, quoniam solus Christus est et Iustitia et veritas eius, que non possint a Deo Iudicari, cum et ipsa omnia sint infinita. Sed Deo laus et gloria in eternum, Qui ea omnia in ipso et cum ipso donauit, Vt per eum Iusti et veraces essemus et Iudicium euaderemus. In nostris autem (sicut incerti sumus, quando nostra sunt) semper timendum est coram Deo." WA 56.246, 21-33, 247, 1-6; LW 25.232-234.

¹⁹⁶ "Respondetur breuiter illud Iacobi: 'Qui offendit in vno, factus est omnium reus.' Fides enim consistit in indiuisibili; aut ergo tota est et omnia credenda credit aut nulla, si vnum non credit. Ideo Dominus eam comparat vni margarite, vni grano synapis etc. Quia 'Christus diuisus non est', ergo in vno totus negatur aut totus affirmatur. Nec simul potest negari et confiteri in alio et alio Verbo. Heretici autem ex credibilibus semper vnum vel plura eligunt, contra quod suum sensum statuunt in superbia sua Velut melius vniuersis aliis sapientes. Ac sic nihil credibilem credunt et sine fide, sine obedientia Dei in magnis suis operibus veri simillimis pereunt, non aliter quam Iudei, qui et ipsi multa credunt, que vere et Ecclesia credit. Sed vni soli opponunt superbi mentem cordis sui, sc. Christo; ideo pereunt in perfidia sua. Ita et superbus quisque in suo sensu semper opponit se Vel precepto Vel consilio recte monentis ad salutem. Cui cum non credit, similiter nihil credit et perit tota fides propter vnius sensus pertinaciam. Semper ergo cedendum sensui nostro humiliter, ne offendamus in hanc petram offensionis i. e. veritatem humiliter nobis obuiam et aduersariam sensui nostro. Cum enim nos simus mendaces, nunquam potest veritas venire ad nos nisi aduersaria specie, quam cogitamus, quia veritatem nos cogitare presumimus Et veritatem nobis consentientem et applaudentem Volumus audire et apparere. Sed hoc non potest fieri." WA 56.249, 19-28, 250, 1-12; LW 25.236-239.

¹⁹⁷ "Per talem presumptionem et superbiem fit, vt etiam opera gratie mutantur in opera legis et Iustitia Dei in Iustitiam hominum, Quia scil., vbi in gratia fecerint opera bona, in iis sibi placent ac ibi stant nec procedere curant, quasi sic Iustitiam perfecte apprehenderint, Cum ita procedendum fuerat, Vt hec opera bona velut preparatoria estimare debuerint. Immo omnia opera Iusta et in gratia facta sunt preparatoria ad sequentem profectum Iustificationis secundum illud 'Qui Iustus est, Iustificetur adhuc' Et 'Ibunt de virtute in virtutem' et 'a claritate in claritatem' cum Apostolo, in anteriora extentus, oblitus posteriorum siue precedentium. Ideo Nullus sanctorum se Iustum putat aut confitetur, Sed Iustificari semper se petit et expectat, propter quod a Deo Iustus reputatur, quia respicit humiles. Sic Christus rex est

judgment and, thus, to constantly beg for God's grace and forgiveness. Luther quoted Job 9:21, "Though I am blameless, I have no regard for myself," as evidence that those who are truly righteous do not see themselves as such.¹⁹⁸ Luther applied the same argument to people's election in that people's fearful uncertainty about their election by God is actually a positive sign because the uncertainty keeps them consistently leaning on God's mercy alone. God must be sought solely through "humble faith" *contra* the "prudence of the flesh."¹⁹⁹

Humility in works

As in Luther's comments on humility regarding knowledge, his teachings on humility in works can also be dually categorized. The first category consists of Luther's insistence on the insufficiency of "outer righteousness" without God's imputation of justification. Luther rejected the Aristotelian view of moral habits or good works being possible through people's own powers. The second category in this section consolidates Luther's teaching on the necessity of constant progress in the life of the Christian.

Although not emphasizing the *viator* status of people to the degree of other late medieval

Iudęorum i. e. confitentium scil. semper se in peccatis esse, et tamen Iustificari querentium ac peccata sua detestantium. Hinc 'mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis', Quod peccatores se agnoscentes et dolentes Iustos reputat, Iustos autem se putantes condemnat. Sic psalmo 31.: 'Dixi: confitebor aduersum me Iniustitiam meam et tu remisisti impietatem peccati mei, pro hoc orabit ad te omnis sanctus' (i. e. Iustus, Iustificatus). Mira res, quod Iustus pro peccatis suis orat. Sicut et Ecclesiastici de Iusto dicitur: 'Et pro delictis suis deprecabitur' et in oratione confitebitur Domino sc. peccatum suum. 'Aduersum me', inquit, Quia hoc est, quod dixi, Iustum se peccatorem agnoscere et tamen odisse peccatum suum, Sicut Impius agnoscit Iustitiam suam et placet sibi in ipsa. Sic et psalmo 50.: 'Quoniam iniquitatem meam cognosco et (non tantum cognosco, Sed etiam) peccatum meum contra me est semper.' Confiteor ergo, quod 'Tibi soli peccaui et malum coram te feci, propterea Iustificabis in verbo tuo', q. d. quia ego agnosco peccatum et odio, ideo tu remittis et Iustificas, quia Iustificaris solus." WA 56.259. 9-32, 1-4; LW 25.246-252.

¹⁹⁸ "Nam Quod sperare Iubemur, certe non ideo Iubemur, vt speremus nos ita fecisse, sicut debemus, Sed quod Dominus misericors, qui solus hanc abyssum nostram (super cuius faciem coram nobis tenebrę sunt) intuetur, non imputet nobis eam ad peccatum, dum ei confiteamur ipsam. Sic Iob: 'Si autem et simplex fuero, hoc ipsum ignorauit anima mea.' Et iterum: 'Verebar omnia opera mea' etc., Scil. Quia Scire non potuit, an duplici corde operatus sit, an, que sua sunt, occultissima cupiditate quesierit." WA 56.236, 24-31; LW 25.222.

¹⁹⁹ WA 56.238; LW 25.223-224. See note 191.

theologians, Luther did consistently teach that the life of humble, justified Christians should be marked by a constant striving to be more pleasing to God and a constant dissatisfaction with their progress.

Luther's rejection of an individual's own self-righteousness was also one of the most overt doctrines of his Lectures on Romans. Time and again he denied people's abilities to do anything pleasing or acceptable to God in their power.²⁰⁰ Thus, Luther's understanding of the effects of original sin in humans was a view that called for humility. People, because of original sin, have a natural aversion towards anything truly good. The entirety of a person's intellect, will, and appetite flee from obedience to God. In this condition, people are unable to do any deeds outside of their own selfish desires for their own good.²⁰¹ People's reason, in their reprobation, always speaks for what is best for them. However, true virtue is doing what is good for God out of pure love. Even people who "seem" to be doing virtuous deeds out of love of virtue itself have impure inward motives, even if the person is unaware of them.²⁰² Luther conceded that the original intent

²⁰⁰ WA 56.159-160, 172-173, 191, 200-204, 236-237, 247-248, 272-274, 275-280, 311-313, 336-339, 355-358, 384-385, 500-505; LW 25.138, 152, 174, 184-188, 221-222, 234, 261, 262-267, 299-300, 325-327, 345-349, 375, 494-498.

²⁰¹ "Secundo autem secundum Apostolum et simplicitatem sensus in Christo Ihesu Est non tantum priuatio qualitatis in voluntate, immo nec tantum priuatio lucis in intellectu, virtutis in memoria, Sed prorsus priuatio vniuersę rectitudinis et potentię omnium virium tam corporis quam animę ac totius hominis interioris et exterioris. Insuper et pronitas ipsa ad malum, Nausea ad bonum, fastidium lucis et sapientię, dilectio autem erroris ac tenebrarum, fuga et abominatio bonorum operum, Cursus autem ad malum. Sicut psalmo 13. Scriptum est: 'Omnes declinauerunt, simul inutiles facti sunt.' Et Genes. 8.: 'Sensus enim et cogitatio cordis humani ad malum proni sunt.' Non enim Istam priuationem tantum Deus odit et Imputat (sicut multi peccatum suum obliti et non agnoscentes), Sed vniuersam ipsam concupiscentiam, Qua fit, vt inobedientes simus huic mandato: 'Non concupisces.' Sicut Apostolus. c. infra clarissime disputat. Hoc enim preceptum ostendit nobis peccatum, sicut Apostolus ait: 'Concupiscentiam nesciebam esse peccatum, nisi lex diceret: Non concupisces.'" WA 56.312, 6-18, 313, 1-3; LW 25.299-300.

²⁰² "Qui querulantur et impatientes sunt, dum beneficientes patiuntur, ostendunt Vel hoc eorum benefacere non ex Deo esse, Sed ex humana Iustitia assumptum, qua homo propter se facit bonum, quia querit reputari et honorari per illud, Quia fugit et odit calumniari et diffamari et odiri propter ipsum. Et sic patet euidenter, quod non ex Charitate et humilitate propter solum Deum benefecerit, Sed propter se et suam opinionem ex occulta superbia et amore sui. Qui enim ex charitate et humilitate propter Deum

might have been pure, but eventually, “pride wins out.”²⁰³ In addition, deeds done out of servitude, habit, fear, or necessity are contrary to a pure love of God.²⁰⁴

Luther rejected Ockham and Duns Scotus’ assertions that original sin did not eradicate but only weakened the will’s ability to do good. He countered that the will is dead to godliness through original sin and incapable of even the tiniest of movements toward God.²⁰⁵ Thus, people are helpless before God to do anything worthy of merit and

operatur, si ex hoc laudatur, dicit: Propter te, o laus, non incepti, ideo propter te nec perficiam. Si vituperatur, dicit: Propter te, o Vituperator, non incepti, propter te non omittam. Et sic amore Dei inceptum prosequitur feliciter munitus a dextris et sinistris.... Vnde Superbię et omni peccato plenum verbum est illud Senece: ‘Si scirem homines non cognituros et deos ignoturos, adhuc peccare nollem.’ Primo, quod non sit possibile hominem ex seipso hanc voluntatem habere, cum sit semper ad malum inclinatus, adeo vt non nisi per gratiam Dei possit erigi ad bonum. Igitur nondum seipsum cognouit, qui tantum de se presumpsit. Verum quidem esse fateor, Quod Aliqua bona eo animo possit facere et velle, Sed non omnia, Quia non sic inclinatus sumus ad malum omnino, quin reliqua sit nobis portio, que ad bonum sit affecta, Vt patet in Synthesi.” WA 56.194, 16-26, 236, 31-32, 237, 1-8; LW 25.135, 177, 222-223.

²⁰³ Luther seemed to be addressing the tenant of *synderesis*, which taught that every man has a *scintilla conscientiae*, or “spark of conscience,” in him. Thus, even in the state of original sin, man has some inclination toward good through the natural law and reason. See Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 475.

²⁰⁴ “Cum oras, sacrificas, chorum Vadis aut quippiam aliud facis, An si in tua situm esset libertate, id ipsum faceres, et Inuenies, quis sis apud Deum. Si enim non faceres, si liberum et integrum haberes, Iam nihil facis, Quia Seruus es et mercennarius. Verum Sunt aliqui, qui cum id sciant, in angulo quopiam sese ponunt Et dicunt: Faciam mihi bonam intentionem et ex necessitate voluntatem. Interim ridens diabolus retro dicit: Schmutz dich, libes ketzle, wir werden geßte habenn, tunc surgit, Vadit chorum et orat Et dicit: Sih eulichen, Wie schon bistu, hastu nu pfawen federn? Si ego nescirem (secundum fabulam) esse asinum, te crederem leonem, ita clamas; Sed pelle tectus leonis, penes aures cognosceris. Deinde incipit tedium, numerat folia et versus, num prope sit finis orandi, Sibique consolator factus dicit: Scotus concludit, quod sufficit intentio virtualis, non requiritur actualis. Tum diabolus: O bene, recte, Securus esto.” WA 56.500, 15-26, 501, 1-2; LW 25.494.

²⁰⁵ “Ac per hoc coram Deo non erat in voluntate, quod coram hominibus apparebat in opere’, econtra, quod non apparebat in opere, erat tamen coram Deo in voluntate, ‘potiusque ex illo rei tenebantur, quod eos nouerat Deus malle (si fieri posset impune) committere.’ Tales autem fuisse Iudeos ex euangelio manifeste patet, Matt. 7., Vbi dicit: ‘Nisi Iustitia vestra abundauerit plus quam Scribarum et Phariseorum’ etc. Hii enim dicebant, Quod irasci animo non erat peccatum, Sed occidere etc. Quare psalmo 1.: ‘Sed in lege Domini Voluntas eius’, Sed hanc non dat nisi gratia per spiritum sanctum. Alioquin semper peccatum per legem occasionem accipit et per eam occidit, quantumlibet fiant opera, tamen Voluntas iacet mortua. Sicut 1. Cor. 15.: ‘Virtus peccati lex, Stimulus autem mortis peccatum est. Deo autem gratias, qui dedit nobis victoriam per Ihesum Christum.’.... Quippe Lex dicit: ‘ non concupisces,’ Sed ‘Deum diliges’. Sed qui aliud concupiscit et diligit, Nunquid Deum diligere potest? At hec concupiscentia semper in nobis est; ergo nunquam dilectio Dei in nobis est, Nisi per gratiam incepta, et reliquo concupiscentie adhuc sanando, quo nondum ‘diligimus Deum ex toto corde’, per misericordiam non imputato ad peccatum, donec totum auferatur et perfecta Dei dilectio donetur credentibus et perseueranter vsque in finem pulsantibus.” WA 56.200, 23-27, 201, 1-8, 275, 9-16; LW 25.184, 262.

are dependent on God to “arouse” the proper disposition in them through His grace. With this, Luther denied a scholastic view that original sin primarily manifested itself in actions or omissions.²⁰⁶

Luther explained that the laws and ordinances of God, rather than intended to prompt outward obedience, were actually meant to stress the appropriate internal disposition to God as Christ instructed in the New Testament. Luther characterized this internal purpose of law as being the works of the law-giver vs. the intention of the law-giver. Rather than desiring only outward obedience, God desires humans to obey His law out of love for him, impossible in humankind’s wayward condition.²⁰⁷

Furthermore, Luther also warned against attempts to emulate the great acts of the saints. He did not deny the works of the saints as worthy of admiration or even emulation, but he did deny that the saints achieved them partially through their own efforts. Rather, the saints did their great deeds out of humble faith in God’s mercy and not through hopes

²⁰⁶ “Quę cum ita sint, Aut ego nunquam intellexi, aut non bene satis de peccato et gratia theologi scolastici sunt locuti, Qui Originale totum auferri somniant sicut et actuale, quasi sint quedam amouibilia in ictu oculi, sicut tenebrę per lucem, Cum Antiqui sancti patres Augustinus Ambrosius multum aliter sint locuti ad modum Scripture, illi autem ad modum Aristotelis in ethicorum, Qui peccata et Iustitiam collocavit in opera et eorum positionem et priuationem similiter.” WA 56.273, 3-9; LW 25.261.

²⁰⁷ “Sane tamen omnia hęc dicta intelligenda sunt, Scil. quod non sic reprobari intelligantur opera Iusta, bona, sancta, Vt omittenda sint, Sed solummodo quoad sensum, estimationem, reputationem ipsorum, hoc est, Vt non in ea sic confidamus nec talia estimemus aut tam digna reputemus, quasi ex ipsis coram Deo sufficienter Iusti esse valeamus. Iste enim Vanitatis sensus et stulta estimatio sola queritur, vt istis verbis explodatur. Alioquin studiosissime fieri eiusmodi debent et omni feruore exerceri, eo scil. fine, vt per ipsa tanquam preparatoria tandem apti et capaces fieri possimus Iustitię Dei, Non vt sint Iustitia, Sed vt querant Iustitiam. Ac per hoc iam non sunt Iustitia nostra, dum nos ipsa non pro Iustitia nobis imputamus. Parare enim illis omnibus oportet viam Domini venturi in nobis. Non autem sunt via Domini. Hęc est enim Iustitia Dei, quam presens Dominus post illa in nobis efficit solus. Quod Moralis intelligentia Scripture, vt vocatur, Sed rectius spiritualis, Est non nisi de charitate seu de affectu, de dilectione Iustitię et odio iniquitatis, Hoc est, quando aliquid faciendum Vel omittendum docetur. Intelligendum est hoc ipsum toto corde, non timore penę seruiliter nec cupiditate comodi pueriliter, Sed amore Dei liberaliter faciendum vel omittendum, quod sine charitate per spiritum sanctum diffusa est Impossibile. Hoc est, Quod Scolastici doctores obscurissime planeque non intelligibiliter dicunt Nullum actum precepti nisi formatum charitate valere. Maledictum vocabulum illud ‘formatum’, quod cogit intelligere animam esse velut eandem post et ante charitatem ac velut accedente forma in actu operari, cum sit necesse ipsam totam mortificari et aliam fieri, antequam charitatem induat et operetur. WA 56.233, 20-33, 337, 10-21; LW 25.188, 218-221, 325-327.

of justification through the works themselves. Even the saints judged themselves “in fear” because they saw themselves as unrighteous before God. According to Luther, their humble attitude, not just their deeds, should be emulated.²⁰⁸

Thus, Luther taught that the purpose of the Law for those outside of God’s grace is not to produce good works and obedience but rather to show people their inadequacy in doing anything out of a “pure love of God.” However, Luther was not rejecting any advantages of doing good works prior to justification.²⁰⁹ Indeed, although Luther denied that works *per se* are meriting of God’s grace, he did admit that they are critical for people to realize their true depravity and need to be humbled. People are only “ready” to be justified after they have utterly despaired of their impotence to do anything God has commanded and have consigned themselves to hell outside of God’s grace.

Only after people humbly cry out to God for mercy and God freely imputes his righteousness to them can they act in a way truly righteous in God’s eyes. Luther illustrated this concept by using a metaphor of an apprentice and a craftsman. An apprentice, rather than trying to produce something worthy of the master’s acceptance from the beginning, only has to believe that the master craftsman is capable of instructing him in the manner and way in which he should work. Thus, for Luther, the only “preparation for grace” that a person needs is a humble faith solely relying on God’s grace for righteousness.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ “Si enim solum pro preteritis peccatis intelligendę sunt confessiones sanctorum et in presenti esse puros [eos ostendunt], Vt quid non solum preterita, Sed etiam presentia confitentur? Nisi quod sciunt in se esse peccatum, Sed propter Christum tegi et non imputari, Vt omne suum bonum extra se in Christo, qui tamen per fidem in ipsis est, protestentur.” WA 56.279, 32-33, 280, 1-4; LW 25.267.

²⁰⁹ Luther himself addressed this accusation in his “Sermon on Good Works” given in 1520. In his sermon, Luther particularly emphasized the importance of good works in the context of faith. Accessed on <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/418/418-h/418-h.htm>.

Luther's second consistent theme in discussing humility regarding one's works was the necessity of constant progress in the Christian's life. He used the Augustinian metaphor of a doctor and a patient (*gratia sanans*, "healing grace") to demonstrate the need for this constant progress as well as the danger of a presumption of "being cured." After people realize the incapacity to cure themselves of a physical ailment, they go to a doctor in hope of being cured. After meeting with the doctor, they become certain the doctor is able to cure them because the doctor assured them of it. However, after the initial confidence in the doctor, people must continue doing what the doctor prescribes to avoid becoming ill again. Luther emphasized that if the patients presume they are "already cured" and discontinue the treatment, they could have a relapse worse than the initial illness.²¹¹ Using this metaphor several times throughout his Lectures on Romans, Luther stressed that people must never consider themselves at their "destination" but should remain humbly reliant on God's grace to get them to their destination.

Luther explicitly taught this doctrine of constant progress in his explanation of Romans 1:17 when Paul used the phrase "from faith to faith." The person who is truly

²¹⁰ "Sicut Bonus artifex tripliciter potest commendari. Primo, dum imperitos artis sue arguit et confundit. Sed hec exilis et superba est commendatio. Secundo, Quando comparatus ceteris (etiamsi non arguat eos) peritior apparet. Tercio, quando perfectionem artis sue aliis petentibus tradit, quod eam ex se habere non potuerant. Hęc est vera commendatio. Reprehendere enim alios et apparere artificem, hoc non est esse optimum artificem; Sed efficere artifices sui similes, hoc est laudabilem esse artificem. Primus enim modus Inuoluit sepe superbiam et elationem, Secundus autem inuidiam et arrogantiam. Tertius autem ipse Est Beniuolentia et humanitas. Sic Deus Iustus est effectiue in nobis laudabilis, quia nos sui similes facit.

Verum sicut artifex ille incredulis et qui sibi satis periti videntur, non potest suam peritiam tradere neque ex ipsis gloriam et commendationem potest consequi artis sue et magisterii, nisi ipsi prius agnoscant se imperitos, Et credant ei imperitos eos affirmanti, Sed superbia eos non sinit ei credere, Ita Impii non credunt, quod sint Impii, ideoque neque agnoscunt. Inde denique non sinunt Deum in seipsis Iustificari, verificari etc. ac per hoc nec commendari aut glorificari." WA 56.222, 2-19; LW 25.206-207.

²¹¹ "Vide nunc, quod supra dixi, Quod simul Sancti, dum sunt Iusti, sunt peccatores; Iusti, quia credunt in Christum, cuius Iustitia eos tegit et eis imputatur, peccatores autem, quia non implent legem, non sunt sine concupiscentia, Sed sicut egrotantes sub cura medici, qui sunt re vera egroti, Sed inchoatiue et in spe sani seu potius sanificati i. e. sani fientes, quibus nocentissima est sanitatis presumptio, quia peius recidiant." WA 56.347, 8-14; LW 25.336.

justified consistently strives for stronger faith and greater obedience to God.²¹² All good works performed through God's grace are meant to lead to more good works. People, in the present life, can never be completely righteous. Rather the Christian life is the striving to be righteous but never being purely righteous.²¹³ God purposefully leaves the *fomes peccati*, "the tinder of sin," inside of people in order to bring humility and continued reliance on him for righteousness.²¹⁴

Again, Luther's doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator* is crucial to the life of a Christian. The Christian will always face temptation in their life and should continuously

²¹² "Item: 'ibunt de virtute in virtutem', ita 'de fide in fidem', semper magis ac magis credendo, Vt 'qui iustus est, iustificetur adhuc', ne quis statim arbitretur se apprehendisse et ita desinat proficere i. e. incipiat deficere. B. Aug[ustinus] c. XI. de spi. et lit. Sic: 'ex fide annunciantium in fidem obedientium'. Burgensis: 'Ex fide' (scil. velut a termino a quo) 'synagoge in fidem Ecclesie' (velut ad terminum ad quem). Sed Apostolus dicit, quod iustitia sit ex fide, sed Gentes non habuerunt fidem, ex qua in aliam ducti iustificarentur." WA 56.173, 11-18; LW 25.153.

²¹³ "Per talem presumptionem et superbiem fit, vt etiam opera gratiæ mutantur in opera legis et Iustitia Dei in Iustitiam hominum, Quia scil., vbi in gratia fecerint opera bona, in iis sibi placent ac ibi stant nec procedere curant, quasi sic Iustitiam perfecte apprehenderint, Cum ita procedendum fuerat, Vt hæc opera bona velut preparatoria estimare debuerint. Immo omnia opera Iusta et in gratia facta sunt preparatoria ad sequentem profectum Iustificationis secundum illud 'Qui Iustus est, Iustificetur adhuc' Et 'Ibunt de virtute in virtutem' et 'a claritate in claritatem' cum Apostolo, in anteriora extentus, oblitus posteriorum siue precedentium. Ideo Nullus sanctorum se Iustum putat aut confitetur, Sed Iustificari semper se petit et expectat, propter quod a Deo Iustus reputatur, quia respicit humiles. Sic Christus rex est Iudæorum i. e. confitentium scil. semper se in peccatis esse, et tamen Iustificari querentium ac peccata sua detestantium. Hinc 'mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis', Quod peccatores se agnoscentes et dolentes Iustos reputat, Iustos autem se putantes condemnat. Sic psalmo 31.: 'Dixi: confitebor aduersum me Iniustitiam meam et tu remisisti impietatem peccati mei, pro hoc orabit ad te omnis sanctus' (i. e. Iustus, Iustificatus). Mira res, quod Iustus pro peccatis suis orat. Sicut et Ecclesiastici de Iusto dicitur: 'Et pro delictis suis deprecabitur' et in oratione confitebitur Domino sc. peccatum suum. 'Aduersum me', inquit, Quia hoc est, quod dixi, Iustum se peccatorem agnoscere et tamen odisse peccatum suum, Sicut Impius agnoscit Iustitiam suam et placet sibi in ipsa... Quare tota Vita populi noui, populi fidelis, populi spiritualis Est gemitu cordis, voce operis, opere corporis non nisi postulare, querere et petere Iustificari semper vsque ad mortem, Nunquam stare, nunquam apprehendisse, Nulla opera ponere finem adeptæ Iustitiæ, Sed tanquam adhuc semper extra se habitantem expectare, Se vero semper in peccatis adhuc viuere et esse." WA 56.259, 9-32, 264, 16-21; LW 25.246, 251-252.

²¹⁴ "Deus enim ideo nos in peccato isto, in fomite, in concupiscentia derelinquit, Vt nos in timore sui et humilitate custodiat, vt sic ad eius gratiam semper recurramus, Semper pauidi, ne peccemus i. e. semper orantes, ne nobis imputet et peccatum dominari sinat. Immo eoipso peccamus non timendo, Quippe cum hoc malum in nobis per se sit peccatum, quia non implemus propter ipsum dilectionem Dei super omnia." WA 56.281, 5-11; LW 25.268.

cry out to God over the perpetual existence of sin.²¹⁵ The existence of the *fomes peccati* is not “harmful” as long as Christians strive to continue in their conversions. Furthermore, the continued existence of sin is also useful because it brings humility and prevents people from thinking they have “arrived.”²¹⁶ Thus, people must constantly yearn to be righteous while, in fact, God has already imputed his righteousness to them *extra nos*.

In addition, Luther also explained that constant progress is necessary in Christians because they are not able to have certain knowledge of when or even if God has yet imputed righteousness to them. The absolute knowledge of righteousness being imputed is outside of humankind’s intellect.²¹⁷ Also, as previously mentioned, people cannot know if they harbor “hidden unbelief” or if their works are truly done out of love for God. Those who are actually doing good works out of love for God repeatedly question their intentions and constantly fear relapsing into reliance upon their own powers.²¹⁸ At

²¹⁵ “Ecce sic fit per legem cognitio peccati, quod in nobis est, i. e. male voluntatis ad malum prone et ad bonum abhorrentis. Quam autem Vtilis est hec cognitio! Quia qui hoc cognoscit, gemit ad Deum et humiliatus petit erigi et sanari hanc voluntatem. Qui autem non cognoscit, non petit; qui autem non petit, non accipit, ideo nec Iustificatur, quia ignorat suum peccatum. Vnde idem est dicere: per legem cognitio ‘peccati’ siue ‘peccatorum’. Quia per ipsum cognoscimus nos peccatores et peccatum in nobis esse, malos et malum in nobis esse” WA 56.254, 9-17; LW 25.239-240.

²¹⁶ WA 56.281; LW 25.268. See note 214.

²¹⁷ “Iustus est, ‘cui Dominus non imputat peccatum’. Illi sciunt, quantum et quid operandum, Vt Iustus quis sit. Isti vero ignorant, quando Iusti sunt, quia ex Deo reputante Iusti tantummodo sunt, cuius reputationem nemo nouit, Sed solum postulare et sperare debet. Ideo illi habent tempus, quando se non putent esse peccatores. Isti Vero semper sciunt se esse peccatores... Et per timorem Iudicii mors eorum et peccatum manifestum est cum ipsis, apud se ipsos et in conscientia sua. Semper se Iudicant in timore, quia sciunt sese ex seipsis non posse Iustos esse coram Deo. Et ita Iudicium Dei timent in operibus omnibus, sicut Iob ait: ‘Verebar omnia opera mea Sciens, quia non parcis delinquenti.’ Et tamen ne desperent, misericordiam in Christo inuocant Et ita exaudiuntur. Hęc est sapientia abscondita in mysterio et veritas. Quia sicut Deus et Consilium ipsius nobis ignota sunt, Ita et Iustitia nostra, que in ipso et consilio eius tota pendet.” WA 56.268, 19-24, 290, 23-31; LW 25.256-257, 278.

²¹⁸ “Quare enim et Apostolus Petrus precipit: ‘Deum timete?’ Et Paulus ‘Hominibus timorem Dei suademus.’ Et iterum: ‘cum timore et tremore vestram ipsorum salutem operamini.’ Et psalmus: ‘Seruite Domino in timore et exultate ei cum tremore.’ Quomodo potest timere Deum Vel opera sua, Nisi ea mala et suspecta habeat? Timor enim a malo est. Ideo Sancti solliciti sunt pro gratia Dei semper Inuocanda. Non confidunt in bonam intentionem aut vniuersam diligentiam suam, Sed semper adhuc sese malum agere timent. Quo timore humiliati gratiam querunt et gemunt, Qua humilitate et Deum sibi propitium faciunt.

this point in his theological development, therefore, Luther actually emphasized people's inability to know, with certain knowledge, their righteousness before God. As a result, one of the main effects of this uncertainty is the continued ontological development of people's souls. Luther, at several points in his Lectures on Romans, emphasized the theme that "whoever does not progress, regresses."²¹⁹ Although people will never be completely free of *fomes peccati* while on earth, they are to be continuously healed from sin. For Luther, people who are actually righteous "wait to be justified."²²⁰

Pestilentissimum itaque genus predicantium Est hodie, Quod de signis presentis gratiæ predicat, Vt securos homines faciat, Cum hoc sit optimum signum gratiæ, timere scil. et tremere, Et presentissimum signum iræ Dei securum esse et confidere. Ad quod tamen omnes anhelant miro furore. Sic enim per timorem gratia Inuenitur Et per gratiam Voluntarius homo efficitur ad opera bona, Sine qua Inuitus est. Qua tamen (Vt ita dixerim) Inuitate fit sine timore, durus et securus, quod externe illa perficit in oculis suis et hominum." WA 56. 290 (see note 199), 503, 13-22, 504, 1-7; LW 25.236-237, 278, 408, 497-498.

²¹⁹ "Affectus autem siue Requisite Dei Est ipsa Charitas Dei, que facit nos velle et amare, quod intellectus fecit intelligere. Quia etiamsi intelligatur et credatur, Non tamen sine gratia Dei potest amari et volenter fieri, quod creditum et intellectum est. Pulchre autem dicit: 'Non est requirens.' Quia huius vitæ status non habendo, sed querendo Deo peragitur. Semper querendum et requirendum i. e. iterum ac iterum querendum. Sicut ait psalmo 103.: 'Querite faciem eius semper.' Et 'illuc enim ascenderunt tribus' etc. Sic enim itur de virtute in virtutem, a claritate in claritatem in eandem formam. Non enim qui incipit et querit, sed 'qui perseuerat' et requirit 'vsque in finem, hic saluus erit', semper incipiens, querens et quesitum semper requirens. Qui enim non proficit in via Dei, deficit. Et qui non requirit, quesitum amittit, cum non sit standum in via Dei. 'Et Vbi incipimus nolle fieri meliores, desinimus esse boni', Vt ait S. Bernardus." WA 56.239, 10-23; LW 25.225.

²²⁰ "Per talem presumptionem et superbiam fit, vt etiam opera gratiæ mutantur in opera legis et Iustitia Dei in Iustitiam hominum, Quia scil., vbi in gratia fecerint opera bona, in iis sibi placent ac ibi stant nec procedere curant, quasi sic Iustitiam perfecte apprehenderint, Cum ita procedendum fuerat, Vt hæc opera bona velut preparatoria estimare debuerint. Immo omnia opera Iusta et in gratia facta sunt preparatoria ad sequentem profectum Iustificationis secundum illud 'Qui Iustus est, Iustificetur adhuc' Et 'Ibunt de virtute in virtutem' et 'a claritate in claritatem' cum Apostolo, in anteriora extentus, oblitus posteriorum siue precedentium. Ideo Nullus sanctorum se Iustum putat aut confitetur, Sed Iustificari semper se petit et expectat, propter quod a Deo Iustus reputatur, quia respicit humiles." WA 56.259, 9-20; LW 25.246.

Chapter 4

Relationship between *Humilitas* and *Cognitio Incerta* in Romans

As we have seen, Luther, in his Lectures on Romans indicated that one's humble condition manifests itself in uncertain knowledge in certain areas. Significantly, Luther applied the uncertainty to Christians rather than unbelievers who naturally have degraded cognitive abilities and are unable to realize their perilous and hopeless condition. Even the believer, to whom God has imputed Christ's righteousness, should have a persistent uncertainty in key areas of the Christian life. Thus, having analyzed Luther's theology of humility in Romans, Luther's comments on uncertainty will next be analyzed to establish the role of humility on them.

The two primary areas of uncertainty that Luther maintained exists for the believer were in the knowledge regarding one's justification *extra nos* and the fullness of one's faith.²²¹ Both of these "areas" of uncertainty are somewhat intriguing considering Luther's common reputation as the champion of *sola fide* and a lone voice espousing certainty of salvation in a direct antithesis to the Church's doctrine of his day. Bengt Hägglund affirmed this certainty as the core of Luther's theology.²²² Thus, given Luther's seemingly paradoxical statements in his Lectures on Romans, a more in-depth analysis is necessary regarding what Luther meant when he described the aforementioned uncertainties, especially from his perspective of humility. However, first the areas of uncertainty described by Luther must be outlined in greater detail.

²²¹ WA 56.236-238, 250-253, 268-270, 290-291, 346-348, 350-351, 375-377, 408-409, 413-414, 415-416, 446-447, 503-505; LW 25.222-223, 237-239, 256-258, 277-278, 335-336, 339, 365-366, 398, 404, 407, 438-439, 498.

²²² Hägglund, "Heilsgewissheit," 760.

Luther repeatedly emphasized that even Christians' knowledge of themselves pales in comparison to God's knowledge of them.²²³ Indeed, those who have been humbled by the knowledge of their depravity before God and cry out for His mercy, which is *per se* only possible through God's grace, are far beyond the reprobate who are not even aware of their precarious condition *coram Deo*.²²⁴ However, Christians, with the knowledge of their need and of God's provisions for their "sickness," still do not have access to God's "hidden knowledge."²²⁵ Thus, for Luther, part of God's hidden knowledge for Christians was the certain knowledge of the time or place of imputation of Christ's righteousness or even imputation itself.

The main cause for this lack of certainty about imputation was Luther's doctrine of justification "*extra nos*." By the term *extra nos* (outside of us) Luther believed that one's justification happened externally (*extrinsecus*) through God imputing Christ's righteousness to someone and likewise not imputing that person's guilt.²²⁶ People can do

²²³ "Cum hic potius contrarium fieri doceatur. Quia non tantum laboratur in Ecclesia, vt Iustitia et Sapientia nostra nihil sit neque efferatur per gloriam neque celebretur per opinionem, Non, inquam, istud adeo laboratur (Immo secundum Euangelium 'Lucernam accensam oportet poni non sub modio, sed super Candelabrum, vt luceat omnibus, qui in domo sunt', Et 'Civitas non potest abscondi supra montem posita'), Sed vt destruat et euellatur de affectu et complacentia interiori nostra coram oculis nostris. Quando enim in nostris oculis vilem habuerimus, tum facile erit aliorum Iudicia et laudem nihil curare. Sicut per Iheremiam dicit: 'vt euellas, destruas, dissipas et disperdas' Scil. omnia, que in nobis sunt (i. e. que nobis ex nobis et in nobis placent) 'et edifies et plantes' Scil. omnia, que extra nos sunt et in Christo. Et figura Danielis de lapide statuam destruente. Deus enim nos non per domesticam, Sed per extraneam Iustitiam et sapientiam vult saluare, Non que veniat et nascatur ex nobis, Sed que aliunde veniat in nos, Non que in terra nostra oritur, Sed que de celo venit. Igitur omnino Externa et aliena Iustitia oportet erudiri. Quare primum oportet propriam et domesticam euelli." WA 56.157, 20-22, 158, 1-14; LW 25.135-136.

²²⁴ "Ideo satur veritate et sapientia sua non est capax veritatis et sapientie Dei, Quę non nisi in vacuum et inane recipi potest. Ergo dicamus Deo: O quam libenter sumus vacui, vt tu plenus sis in nobis! Libenter infirmus, vt tua virtus in me habitet; libenter peccator, vt tu Iustificeris in me; libenter Insiptens, vt tu mea sapientia sis; libenter Iniustus, vt tu sis Iustitia mea! Ecce hoc est, quod ait: 'Tibi peccaui, vt Iustificeris in sermonibus tuis.'" WA 56.219, 5-11; LW 25.204.

²²⁵ WA 56.238, 20-28; LW 25.222-223. See note 191.

²²⁶ "Sancti Intrinsicę sunt peccatores semper, ideo extrinsicę Iustificantur semper. Hipocrite autem intrinsicę sunt Iusti semper, ideo extrinsicę sunt peccatores semper.

nothing to bring this imputation about except cry out to God for mercy. Thus, people are brought back to a proper relationship with God *only* through God's actions happening outside of their cognitive realm. Therefore, since it is through God's work and council alone that people are justified, they cannot know exactly when, where, or even if God no longer imputes their sins to them.²²⁷

Likewise, Luther described the proud, who know they are righteous, as having a *periculosa presumptio* or "dangerous presumption." In their arrogance, they do not listen to God's Word and are deceived about their condition.²²⁸ However, those who truly depend on God's mercy do not know if Christ's righteousness has been imputed toward them. The best Christians can do is trust in God's imputation because no one fully knows where they stand.²²⁹ Thus, true saints continue to consider themselves sinners and the reprobate consider themselves saints. This antithesis was the core of Luther's famous doctrine, *simul iustus et peccator*, which means one is both a sinner and righteous at the same time. Under this doctrine, Christians' anxiety over their spiritual state and continued anguish over the *fomes peccati* remaining in them is a positive sign (but not

Intrinsece dico, i. e. quomodo in nobis, in nostris oculis, in nostra estimatione sumus, Extrinsece autem, quomodo apud Deum et in reputatione eius sumus. Igitur extrinsece sumus Iusti, quando non ex nobis nec ex operibus, Sed ex sola Dei reputatione Iusti sumus. Reputatio enim eius non in nobis nec in potestate nostra est. ergo nec Iustitia nostra in nobis est nec in potestate nostra. Sicut Osee 13.: 'Perditio tua, Israel, tantum in me auxilium tuum' i. e. intra te non est nisi perditio, Sed salus tua extra te est. Et psalmo 120.: 'Auxilium meum a Domino' q. d. non ex me. Intrinsece autem sumus peccatores per naturam relatiuorum. Quia si solum Deo reputante sumus Iusti, ergo non nobis uiuentibus vel operantibus." WA 56.268, 27-32, 269, 1-9; LW 25.257-258.

²²⁷ "Iustus est, 'cui Dominus non imputat peccatum'. Illi sciunt, quantum et quid operandum, Vt Iustus quis sit. Isti vero ignorant, quando Iusti sunt, quia ex Deo reputante Iusti tantummodo sunt, cuius reputationem nemo nouit, Sed solum postulare et sperare debet. Ideo illi habent tempus, quando se non putent esse peccatores. Isti Vero semper sciunt se esse peccatores." WA 56.268, 19-25; LW 25.256-257.

²²⁸ "2. Cor. 4.: 'Quis te discernit'? Item: 'Nolite ante tempus Iudicare' etc. Quod enim quibusdam videtur se talem habere voluntatem, periculosa est presumptio, In qua plurimi astutissime falluntur, dum confisi se iam habere gratiam Dei omittunt sua secreta rimari, tepescunt quottidie et in litera tandem moriuntur." WA 56.236, 12-16; LW 25.221.

²²⁹ WA 56. 268; LW 257-258. See note 227.

certain) of being justified.²³⁰ Thus, Luther expressed that none of the saints, including the great saints from the history of the Church, said or thought that they were righteous but rather “waited to be justified.”²³¹

The second area of uncertain knowledge that Luther outlined in Romans, uncertainty about one’s faith, was particularly emphasized in Luther’s exposition of Romans 3. Luther read verse 22, “Righteousness of God through faith,” as talking about a complete faith that not only believes “in Christ” but also believes in “everything that pertains to Christ.”²³² Under “everything that pertains to Christ,” Luther included not

²³⁰ “‘Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis’, Cui simul sunt Iusti et Iniusti.

Et Mirabilis in hipocritis Deus, Cui simul sunt Iniusti et Iusti.

Quia dum sancti peccatum suum semper in conspectu habent et Iustitiam a Deo secundum misericordiam ipsius implorant, eoipso semper quoque Iusti a Deo reputantur. Ergo sibiipsis et in veritate Iniusti sunt, Deo autem propter hanc confessionem peccati eos reputanti Iusti; Re vera peccatores, Sed reputatione miserentis Dei Iusti; Ignoranter Iusti et Scienter inIusti; peccatores in re, Iusti autem in spe. Et hoc est, quod dicit hic: ‘Beati, quorum remisse iniquitates et tecta peccata.’ Vnde sequitur: ‘Dixi: confitebor aduersum me Iniustitiam meam’ (i. e. in conspectu meo semper habeo peccatum meum, quod tibi confitear). Ideo ‘et tu remisisti impietatem peccati’, Non solum mihi, Sed omnibus. Vnde sequitur: ‘Pro hac orabit ad te omnis sanctus.’ Ecce omnis sanctus est peccator et orat pro peccatis suis. Sic Iustus in principio est accusator sui. Et iterum: ‘Iustus pro delictis suis deprecabitur.’ Et iterum psalmo 37.: ‘Quoniam iniquitatem meam annuntiabo et pro peccato meo cogitabo.’ Igitur Mirabilis et dulcissima misericordia Dei, Qui nos simul peccatores et non-peccatores habet. Simul manet peccatum et non manet. Ergo Intelligentia hic est opus secundum titulum psalmi. Rursum mirabilis et seuera ira. Qui simul impios habet Iniustos et Iustos. Simul tollitur eorum peccatum et non tollitur. Vnde.” WA 56.269, 21-30, 270, 1-13; LW 25.258.

²³¹ “Immo omnia opera Iusta et in gratia facta sunt preparatoria ad sequentem profectum Iustificationis secundum illud ‘Qui Iustus est, Iustificetur adhuc’ Et ‘Ibunt de virtute in virtutem’ et ‘a claritate in claritatem’ cum Apostolo, in anteriora extensus, oblitus posteriorum siue precedentium. Ideo Nullus sanctorum se Iustum putat aut confitetur, Sed Iustificari semper se petit et expectat, propter quod a Deo Iustus reputatur, quia respicit humiles.” WA 56.259, 14-20; LW 25.246.

²³² “Doctrina: Cum fides Christi, qua Iustificamur, sit non solum in Christum siue in personam Christi, Sed in omnia, que Christi sunt, credere, frustra sibi superbi et heretici blandiuntur et placent, quod in Christum credant et ea, que ipse sunt, nolunt credere. Ipsi sane sic diuidunt Christum, Vt aliud sit in Christum, aliud in ea, que Christi sunt, credere, reuera autem ‘Christus non est diuisus’, vt ait Apostolus, et supra fides Christi similiter in indiuisibili esse dicta est, ita vt sit idem Christus et ea, que Christi sunt. Igitur heretici confitentur et gloriantur, quod in Christum credant, secundum quod euangelia de ipso loquuntur, nato, passo, mortuo etc. Sed non credunt in ea, que sunt ipsius. Que sunt illa? Ecclesia scilicet et omne verbum, quod ex ore prelati Ecclesie procedit Vel boni et sancti viri, Christi verbum est, qui dicit: ‘Qui vos audit, me audit.’ Qui ergo a prelati se subtrahunt, verbum eorum nolunt audire, suum autem sensum sequuntur, quero, quomodo in Christum credant? An quod natum esse et passum credunt, docentem vero non credunt? ‘Diuisus ergo est Christus’, Quia ibi in eum credunt, hic negant? Absit. Sed totum

only what was said in the gospels, but also the words and teachings of the disciples, apostles, and “holy men” throughout history. Luther referred to these ecclesiastical sources as an indivisible part of God’s Word.²³³

Luther then established that Christ, or The Word of Christ, cannot be divided. Someone cannot confess Christ in one regard and deny him in another and still be considered a believer “in Christ.” Thus, for Luther, complete faith was an all or nothing condition: either Christ is believed in “all that pertains to him” or he is completely denied. With this view of faith in mind, Luther explained that nobody is able to know for certain whether they believe in all things that “pertain to Christ.”²³⁴ Self-introspection is insufficient because Luther stressed that people could have unbelief in areas that they are not aware of or *ignoratam incredulitatem*.²³⁵

Thus, people could genuinely examine themselves to the best of their abilities and affirm that they believe, to the utmost, in Christ, but still unknowingly be denying Christ in an “unknown” area. Furthermore, since Christ “cannot be divided and confessed at the same time,” people are guilty of a complete denial of Christ even if unwittingly. According to this doctrine, people are left in tension between belief and unbelief. They

Christum etiam hic negant, qui non potest simul negari et confiteri.” WA 56.251,12-229, 252, 1-3; LW 25.237.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ “Quę cum ita sint, in immensum nos oportet humiliari. Quia cum non possimus scire, an in omni verbo Dei viuamus aut nullum negemus (cum multa a prelato, multa a fratribus, multa in euangelio et Apostolis, multa interne nobis a Deo dicantur) nunquam scire possumus, an Iustificati simus, an credamus. Idcirco, tanquam opera nostra sint opera legis ęstimemus, et humiliter peccatores simus in sola misericordia eius Iustificari cupientes. Quamquam enim certi simus nos in Christum credere, non tamen certi sumus nos in omnia, que ipsius sunt, Verba credere. ac per hoc etiam ‘in ipsum Credere’ incertum est.

Quia et in prophetis nihil arguitur, quam quod vox Domini non auditur a populo suo. Qui autem sic timuerit et humiliter confessus fuerit, dabitur ei gratia, vt Iustificetur et dimittatur peccatum, si quid forte per occultam et ignoratam incredulitatem fęcerit.” WA 56.252, 17-29; LW 25.238-239.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

can, to the best of their ability, trust Christ's mercy with all of their heart and yet not be sure whether they truly believe.²³⁶

Thus, having further outlined Luther's comments on uncertain knowledge and established that Luther's framework in his Lectures on Romans was the necessity of humility, the question of the context of Luther's denial of people's abilities to have certain knowledge can be examined.

Luther's comments on uncertainty cannot be construed as espousing skepticism in God or his Word. Luther emphatically taught throughout his Lectures on Romans that God's Word is to be totally trusted and the only real source of complete truth. Luther never used the Latin word for doubt, *dubitatio* or *dubitas* in concert with God's Word or commands. Thus Luther did not intend his readers to give up on their faith or to live in the same kind of fear that he experienced, because "*incertum credimus in ipsum Christum est.*"²³⁷ Additionally, Luther's comments on uncertain knowledge are clarified when they are put in context with his theme of humility in Romans.

Under this framework of humility, people's knowledge and understanding are woefully inadequate in understanding the "secret councils" of God.²³⁸ In his exposition of verse 26 of the eighth chapter of Romans, "For we do not know how to pray," Luther

²³⁶ WA 56.252, 17-29; LW 25.238-239. See note 234.

²³⁷ "Quamquam enim certi simus nos in Christum credere, non tamen certi sumus nos in omnia, que ipsius sunt, Verba credere. ac per hoc etiam 'in ipsum Credere' incertum est." WA 56.252, 23-35; LW 25.239.

²³⁸ "Inde enim fit, Quod cum petimus Deum, quecunque illa tandem sint, Et ipse exaudiens incipit ea velle donare, Sic donat, vt contraveniat omnibus nostris conceptibus i. e. cogitationibus, ita vt appareat nobis post petitiones magis offensum esse et minus fieri ea, que petimus, quam ante. Quod totum ideo facit, Quia Natura Dei est, prius destruere et annihilare, quicquid in nobis est, antequam sua donet; sicut Scriptum est: 'Dominus pauperem facit et ditat, deducit ad inferos et reducit.'

Eo enim consilio suo piissimo facit nos capaces donorum suorum et operum suorum. Capaces autem tunc sumus operum et consiliorum eius, Quando nostra consilia cessant et opera quiescunt et efficimur pure passivi respectu Dei, tam quoad interiores quam exteriores actus." WA 56.375, 14-24; LW 25.365.

paid particular attention to one's meager ability to understand the Will of God.

Acknowledging that Paul was speaking to Christians, Luther asserted that God's council is far above people's and that all human councils must "cease" before God can implement his council.²³⁹

Thus, due to the antithetical nature of people and God's council, Luther had an inverse relationship between people's prayers and God's answers. For Luther, it was actually a positive sign if God answers people's prayers in a manner opposite to their own wisdom. Because of this, Luther constantly encouraged his students to act in the opposite direction of their own wisdom and understanding.²⁴⁰

The humble condition of one's "council" was, in part, a result of Luther's view of the results of the Fall of Man. Luther believed that sin infected people in their entirety. People's wills and intellects are not merely bent away from God but completely devoid of any ability to move toward God. People cannot approach God outside of grace, but rather God must approach them. In their own power, people cannot come to a realization of their reprobate condition, let alone accomplish anything meritorious.

Even when people, through God's grace, understand their condition and cry out for God's mercy the gulf between them and God's "council" remains extreme. Indeed, people now understand their need of God's mercy as well as God's provisions for their justification, but God's council regarding the details of his imputation and people's inner

²³⁹ WA 56.375, 14-24; LW 25.365. See note 238.

²⁴⁰ WA 56.218-219, 229-230, 233, 250-251, 363-364, 376-377, 407-408, 448-449; LW 25.204, 214, 218, 237, 353, 366, 397, 441.

fides remains and must always remain unknown.²⁴¹ As previously mentioned, justification happens *extra nos*, in the God's domain rather than people's.

Additionally, our knowledge of ourselves, although correct in recognizing our need for God, still is unable to identify any *ignorantam incredulitatem*.²⁴² Even though people have been justified *extra nos*, the doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator* still applies.²⁴³ God has imputed his righteousness to them, but the “tinder of sin” remains and will always remain in them, affecting their intellect and will until the day they die.²⁴⁴ The Christian life is one of constant progress where Christians are constantly crying out over and battling the ever-present existence of sin. Using Luther's metaphor of the sick patient and the doctor, people are continuously being cured in this life but will never be totally healed until their death. All people can do is trust the doctor's promise to ultimately cure them.²⁴⁵ This is all intended to emphasize the need for people to remain humble in their own abilities and knowledge and solely to rely on God's grace *extra nos* to heal them.

Therefore, people's inability to know with certainty when or if God has imputed Christ's righteousness to them or if their faith is devoid of any covert “denials” was a result of the created gulf between humankind and God as well as the additional chasm due to sin. People's humble status manifests in their lack of certainty in God's “secret

²⁴¹ WA 56.247; LW 25.233. See note 195.

²⁴² WA 56.252; LW 25.238-239. See note 234.

²⁴³ WA 56.269; LW 25.258. See note 230.

²⁴⁴ WA 56.259, 256-266, 280-281, 329-330; LW 25.246, 253, 268, 317.

²⁴⁵ “Est enim simile sicut cum egroto, Qui promittenti medico certissimam sanitatem credit et precepto eius obediens interim in spe promissae sanitatis abstinet ab iis, que prohibita sunt ei, ne promissam sanitatem impediatur et morbum augeat, donec impleat medicus, quod promisit. Iste enim Aegrotus nunquid sanus est? Immo egrotus simul et sanus. Egrotus in rei veritate, Sed sanus ex certa promissione medici, cui credit, qui eum iam Velut sanum reputat, quia certus, quod sanabit eum, quia incepit eum sanare nec imputavit ei egritudinem ad mortem.” WA 56.272, 3-11; LW 25.260.

councils.” However, Luther’s theme of humility did not only explain the reason behind people’s uncertain knowledge, but also the reason why this uncertainty is a necessary part of a Christian’s life.

Ultimately, humility provides the framework from which Luther expressed the necessity of uncertainty in faith and righteousness. For each individual area of uncertainty as well as in an accumulative sense, humility explains the overall purpose. Through teaching people’s inability to know for certain their justification, Luther intended Christians to be further humbled.²⁴⁶ At this stage in Luther’s theological development, certain knowledge of the details one’s justification was a “dangerous presumption” or *periculosa presumptio* which falsely exists in those who are trusting in their works for righteousness.²⁴⁷ People, not being able to be certain of their standing before God, should respond to this uncertainty by further, humble trust in God’s mercy alone for their justification.

For Luther, uncertain knowledge of the precise time and place of justification as well as the purity of one’s faith was a safeguard against Christians becoming prideful in their own efforts or trusting in their subsequent works for righteousness. Because people are not able to know their standing with God they can never be satisfied and stagnant in their Christian lives.²⁴⁸ Christians should cry out over the persistent sinful desires remaining in them and trust that God has, is, and will justify them. Thus, this form of

²⁴⁶ WA 56.240-241, 245-247, 250-253, 290-291, 307-308, 338-339, 350-351; LW 25.226, 232-233, 237-239, 278, 294-295, 327, 339.

²⁴⁷ WA 56.236; LW 25.221. See note 228.

²⁴⁸ WA 56.239-241, 259, 264-266, 271-272, 280-281, 347-348, 503-505; LW 25.225-226, 246, 252-253, 260, 268, 336, 498.

uncertainty keeps the Christian continuously in a humble state, relying solely on God's mercy for justification, which, in itself, is where those who are righteous remain.

Humility also explains Luther's overall intentions in teaching people's inability to know the fullness of their faith. First, people must be humble to receive the Word of Truth.²⁴⁹ However, once they have received God's truth, they cannot be certain whether, through the continued influence of sin, they "deny" Christ somewhere in the depths of their hearts. Thus, people, assuming that they deny Christ somewhere in their innermost being, should continuously exhibit the *timor Dei* or fear of God because if "one word is denied, all is denied."²⁵⁰ Therefore Christians, assuming that they lack a true belief "in Christ" and knowing that they can do nothing to remedy it on their own, must humbly rely solely on God's grace.

Luther, painfully aware of the angst and anxiety caused by uncertainty, did not intend Christians to despair over their incomplete faith. As before, Luther taught this form of uncertain knowledge to keep the Christian humble and thus able to receive God's further councils. Nor was Luther teaching that people should doubt God's promises as expressed in Scripture.²⁵¹ It is not God's promise that is uncertain, but rather one's faith and knowledge that is uncertain. Hence, they should not trust in their own faith, but only in God's provisions accomplished outside of their cognitive realm. Again, the only thing that people can do is accept their perpetual sinful condition and trust in God's imputation of righteousness.

²⁴⁹ WA 56.229; LW 25.212-213, 215, 226. See note 185.

²⁵⁰ WA 56.252; LW 25.237-239. See note 233.

²⁵¹ WA 56.229; LW 25.204, 212-214. See note 185.

Ultimately, both of the aforementioned areas of uncertainty converge in Luther's ultimate interpretation of Paul's intention in Romans: "to destroy all wisdom and righteousness of the flesh."²⁵² Luther viewed Romans, as a whole, as *prima facie* evidence that the works of the Law in no way make people righteous *coram Deo*. First, even though people recognize their need for God's mercy and imputation of righteousness, they cannot be certain that God has performed this for them. Subsequently, since only works done *after* justification are considered righteous, people must not presume any of their deeds are acceptable to God. Additionally, people cannot consider their faith as faith which "believes in every Word of Christ." Luther then added that since people cannot know whether they truly believe, they cannot consider themselves justified which in turn disqualifies any of their works from being considered righteous with any certainty.²⁵³

Luther's comments on uncertainty are plausibly explained through his theme of humility that ran through his lectures on the book of Romans. For Luther, people's ability to possess certain knowledge about their justification or the purity of their faith was intimately linked to the necessity of the continued presence of humility.

Additionally, humility, rather than certainty, served as both the key to the door of justification as well as the light leading people on their paths of holiness. Humility, itself a gift from God, allows people to see their truly depraved nature and thus be able to accept the righteousness of Christ through imputation. Additionally, humility prevented Christians from becoming stagnant either through dependence on their works or an

²⁵² WA 56.158; LW 25.135-136. See note 223.

²⁵³ WA 56.157, 235-237, 239-241, 268-270, 290-291, 359-360; LW 25.135, 221-223, 224-226, 256-257, 278, 348-349.

assumption of their own righteousness.²⁵⁴ A life of humility is one of dissatisfaction with one's works and faith and subsequently filled with continual cries to God for mercy and grace. Luther's view of the Christian life, through the lens of humility, may have been or may not have been, as Brecht put it, "a serious and gloomy piety."²⁵⁵ However, unmentioned by Brecht is that, although Luther's view of humility may seem "gloomy," nevertheless, it was, for Luther, the only way that Christians could receive God's blessings and forgiveness in their lives. Additionally, the importance of humility for Luther is obvious in that fact that, despite the misery of his experiences of uncertainty, in his Lectures on Romans at Wittenberg, he viewed certain and uncertain knowledge from his foundational focus on humility.

²⁵⁴ WA 56.238; LW 25.222-223. See note 191.

²⁵⁵ Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 134.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The present work has attempted to both fulfil what the present writer perceives as a dearth of research in the early theology of Martin Luther as well as suggest an approach for further study. Prior studies involving Martin Luther's early theology of humility and certainty have either set the two up as opposites in different "phases" of Luther's theological career or viewed humility through the context of another theological concept. However, the goal of the present work has been to present the impact of Luther's theology of humility in Romans on his concept of certainty directly through the context of humility. Rather than studying humility in the overall timeline of Luther's developing theology and with the purpose of establishing when or if Luther was evangelical at the time, this study has focused on how Luther viewed humility in Romans and its subsequent effect on certainty.

We have seen, through a word study of "humility" in Luther's Lectures on Romans, that several theological topics that Luther wrote extensively on throughout his theological career, i.e. faith, works, the Law, etc. were closely linked to his core theology of humility. Thus, the present work has attempted to shift the vantage point of Luther's theology of humility in Romans, where it has been given only brief treatments in its own right, from other theological topics and place it at the forefront of Luther's early theology. Thus, in order to understand Luther's early theology, particularly his comments on certainty, in the context through which he was working at the time, humility must be given a priority in any study of Luther's early theology, particularly of faith and certainty.

Additionally, the previous work has also tried to view the relationship between humility and certainty in Luther's early theology from a context other than the common venture of separating Luther's theology into "pre-reformer" and "reformer" phases of his life. Despite the fact that the thousands of pages of material that have been produced in the quest for Luther's "Tower Moment" or *Turmerlebnis* have produced many interesting and helpful insights into Martin Luther's development, it has also imposed an arbitrary line of division of which Luther had no knowledge at the time of his Lectures on Romans in 1515-1516. Thus, rather than viewing Luther's doctrine of humility as evidence of his pre-reformation phase where he was still working towards his "mature theology" of certainty of salvation, the present work has humility as context *through* which Luther viewed certainty. Through this approach, it has been established that Luther's core focus on humility in Romans does not stand in opposition to certainty. Rather than speaking against the firm trust in God's Word that would characterize Luther's view of certainty throughout his life, in Romans, Luther was speaking against people who, in their pride, think they have certain knowledge of their own righteousness, which only God can possess.

Thus, it is inappropriate to view humility and certainty in Luther's Lectures on Romans through the dividing line of Luther's evangelical break imposed over five hundred years after he first lectured on Romans. In order to properly understand how Luther viewed the relationship between humility and certainty at this phase in his early theological career, the relationship must be viewed from the context of one of Luther's

most telling statements in his Lectures on Romans, “What else does Scripture teach if not humility?”²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ WA 56.199, 30; LW 25.183. See note 1.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Luther, Martin, *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Vols. 1ff. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883ff.
- _____. *Lectures on Romans* in volume 25 of *Luther's Works*, American Edition. 55 volumes. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986.
- Saint Augustine, *The Enchiridion* in *Basic Theological Writings of Saint Augustine Volume I*. Edited by Whitney J. Oates and Translated by P. Holmes. New York: Random House Publishers, 1948.

Secondary Literature

- Bizer, Ernst. *Fides ex Auditū: Eine Untersuchung über die Entdeckung der Gerechtigkeit Gottes durch Martin Luther*. Neukirchen am Niederrhein: Neukirchener Verlag, 1958.
- Brecht, Martin. *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation: 1483-1521*. 1st paperback edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Hägglund, Bengt. "Heilsgewissheit," *Theologische Realenzyklopadie*, 14, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985, 759-763.
- Hamm, Berndt, *The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation*. Translated by Martin J. Lohrmann. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014.
- Lohse, Bernhard. *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*. Fortress Press Edition. Translated by Roy A. Harrisville. Minneapolis, Michigan: Fortress Press, 2011.
- Oberman, Heiko. "Wir sein pettler. Hoc est verum. Bund und Gnade in der Theologie des Mittelalters und der Reformation." In *Die Reformation: Von Wittenberg nach Genf*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986, 90-143.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Matthew Aaron Stark

Education

Bachelor of Arts: History and Political Sciences/ Indiana Wesleyan University 2006,

(Magna Cum Laude)

Master of Arts: European History/ Indiana University (Indianapolis) 2015.

Honors, Awards, Fellowships

Allen Bowman Award for Excellence in Social Sciences, Indiana Wesleyan University,

2005.

Basic Language Proficiencies

Latin

German

French